



QRC2022

*"Qualitative Inquiry: Expanding the
Boundaries of Methodology and Theory"*

**The 5th QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
CONFERENCE 2022 [QRC '22]**

28-30 November 2022 Online (Webinar)

Proceedings of the 5th UUM International Qualitative Research Conference (QRC) 2022

28-30 November 2022
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Editors:

Fathiyah Abu Bakar

Rusniza Abdul Rahman

Mohd Hadafi Sahdan

Nor Zalina Mohamad Yusof



**Pusat Pengajian Perakaunan
Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz**

TUNKU PUTERI INTAN SAFINAZ SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTANCY

Universiti Utara Malaysia

ISSAD

Institut Kajian Strategik & Pembangunan Perakaunan Mampan
INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC & SUSTAINABLE ACCOUNTING DEVELOPMENT

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Guest Editors

Fathiyyah Abu Bakar, Rusniza Abdul Rahman, Mohd Hadafi Sahdan,
Nor Zalina Mohamad Yusof

Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy, Universiti Utara Malaysia

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Message from Guest Editors

Fathiyah Abu Bakar, Rusniza Abdul Rahman, Mohd Hadafi Sahdan,
Nor Zalina Mohamad Yusof

Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy, Universiti Utara Malaysia

We graciously welcome you to our proceeding of the 5th Qualitative Research Conference 2022, the second time that the conference is conducted virtually due to Covid-19 outbreak. The first one was the last two years, in 2020. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in December 2019, a lot issues and challenges have been occurred in various field, such as medical, psychology, education, business, economic, social, and many more. Now, the time of the post pandemic era, where we are still struggling to overcome all these challenges by planning a good strategy for better economic and social well-being. The situation provides an avenue to embark in qualitative research. It because qualitative research allows the researchers to investigate the meanings people attribute to their behavior, actions, and interactions with others. In addition, the qualitative research focusses on everyday life and people's experiences to create new theories using the inductive method, which can then be tested with further research. For instance, a study can be conducted to explore how students perceive the COVID-19 crisis and what their personal experiences were while studying during the global pandemic.

With the theme, '*Qualitative Inquiry: Expanding the Boundaries of Methodology and Theory*', QRC 2022 aims to promote and stimulate qualitative research at both the national and international levels. Hopefully, this conference provides an avenue to qualitative researchers, academics, professionals, administrators, and students to share information, ideas, and experiences in various fields of knowledge. In addition, the conference may address current issues, challenges and potentials regarding qualitative research and its contribution to the research and academic world and also to enhance understanding and highlight the importance and role of qualitative research in making policy decisions on a variety of global issues. Furthermore, it may help to create and strengthen a global network of qualitative scholars and professionals.

Thank you.

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5th UUM International Qualitative Research Conference (QRC 2022)
28-30 November 2022, [Online] Webinar

Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Navigator Database: Autoethnography on Teaching Environmental and Social Accounting

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Abstract

This paper provides an accounting educator's personal account of preparing, assigning, and assessing a Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Navigator database group project to two sections of her *Introduction to Financial Accounting* class in the fall 2020 term/semester at a university in the North-Eastern United States. The paper uses samples of student-submitted work and the autoethnography method as sources of qualitative data. Hand-written notes were taken during and after the fall 2020 semester in an instructor diary. Recent rereads of student answers were also done. The research results show that generally, the group project on sustainability accounting met the educator's prior expectations in terms of assignment execution, assignment output quality (moderate quality expectations), and overall student interest in the topic (high interest expectations). This research introduces the SASB Navigator database to undergraduate accounting students in two sections of a *Financial Accounting* class and opens venues for them to explore new international business and accounting perspectives. These international perspectives focus on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues and are made possible by the selection of a foreign company listed on the U.S. stock exchanges – the NASDAQ or the NYSE.

Keywords: Autoethnography, environmental, social, and governance (ESG), Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), SASB navigator

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability accounting is slowly, but surely, entering the mainstream of accounting discourse; thus, joining the conventional ranks of financial accounting. The reasons for this change include the urgency of climate change and a sharpened stakeholder awareness of the importance of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues. Any tendency for change in the business and accounting world deserves proper attention in the undergraduate classroom. Accordingly, this paper focuses on sustainability accounting as a topic of a group project assigned to students during one term/semester. Specifically, the paper provides an accounting educator's personal account of preparing, assigning, and assessing a Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Navigator database group project/assignment in two sections of her *Introduction to Financial Accounting* class in the fall 2020 semester at a university in the North-Eastern United States. The paper is structured as follows: first, the SASB Navigator database group assignment is described; second, excerpts from student-submitted work are presented, along with instructor's reflections on the quality of student work; third, a discussion and conclusion follow to wrap up the paper.

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2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTING IN THE ACCOUNTING EDUCATION LITERATURE

Sustainability accounting has been studied extensively in the classroom curricula in different countries. For instance, Wong et al. (2021) discuss a dialogic pedagogy in teaching this subject. Boyce et al. (2012) further provide curriculum and pedagogical suggestions in the teaching of accounting and accountability. Contrafatto (2013, p. 338) suggests that students should be given the chance to be “confronted directly” by “practical” issues regarding “(un)sustainability” since in this way, they can relate to these “palpable” issues. Various courses on sustainability accounting have been introduced to university curricula: Coulson & Thomson (2006) discuss an “Accounting and Sustainability” honours-level degree course at Strathclyde University in Scotland. Owen (2001) states that “[t]he ongoing review of degree structures is likely to encompass evaluating the potential for the Corporate Social Responsibility course to become core to the accounting degree scheme” in the United Kingdom. According to Stevenson (2002), environmental accounting is the dominant social and environmental accounting topic taught.

Mathews (2001), Hazelton & Haigh (2010), and Mangion (2006) analyse sustainability accounting teaching methodologies and practices in Australia. The latter points out that social and environmental accountability comprise the dominant topics taught by her survey respondents – teachers of sustainability classes (pp. 342-343). McGuigan et al. (2017), on the other hand, place the role of the accountant in the wider social context. In this context, current accounting students, i. e. future industry leaders, will have an integral advocacy role (Sheehan et al., 2022). Besides, Sefcik et al. (1997) point out that students in environmental accounting find relations among the different accounting areas: financial, auditing, tax, information systems, and managerial. Finally, Grinnell & Hunt (2000) argue that an integrated course in accounting at the University of Vermont counters the tendency, by both students and instructors, toward disciplinary silo-gazing.

Several sustainability reporting frameworks have been adopted throughout the world: the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), the Climate, Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), the U.N. Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), and World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics. One of the latest additions to this list is the SASB framework. The SASB is a non-profit organisation founded in 2011 that provides industry-related disclosure standards to companies on ESG accounting topics. Participation in the SASB is voluntary. This non-profit organization launched the SASB Navigator database on October 20, 2016. The database “combines financially material sustainability information with data and analytics to help users understand and analyse industries and companies’ sustainability performance and disclosure” (“SASB Releases,” 2016). Currently, Eng (2022) and Palatnik et al. (2021) discuss the use of the SASB Navigator: the former in sustainability disclosures in an industry context, the latter – in the context of a student’s research project. The current paper, however, adds additional insight in the pedagogical accounting literature: to our knowledge, this is the first published paper on a whole-class projects’ output using the SASB Navigator as a data extraction and analysis database. No extant research addresses pedagogical issues related to the hands-on use of the SASB Navigator database in a university classroom. Such use is important because universities train future accountants who may be responsible for ESG reporting. Further, the current paper discusses the characteristics of this classroom project.

The research question posed is: How did students do at a hands-on research team project, using the SASB Navigator database?

3. SASB NAVIGATOR DATABASE PROJECT

The instructor, one of the authors of this paper, prepared the SASB Navigator database assignment with the objectives to introduce undergraduate financial accounting students to sustainability accounting topics, to help students practice research and teamwork skills, and to help students enhance their database usage and analytical thinking skills. In the fall 2020 semester, two sections of the instructor’s undergraduate *Introduction to Financial Accounting* class with a total of forty-six students (22 and 24 students per section) were provided with student licenses for use of the SASB Navigator database (from now on, ‘SASB Navigator’). This database provides information on the quality of ESG disclosures of SEC filers. The students completed a marked/graded assignment in sixteen groups of one to four students per group. The groups were assigned a letter from A to P as a unique group identifier. All groups were composed of three students, except for Groups H, N, and P which were comprised of one, two, and four students, respectively. The reasons for this variety in student numbers per group was that several students dropped the class early or in the middle of the semester or that some students preferred

to work individually. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from the University's IRB Office on 19 November 2020. Via passive consent, the IRB approval allowed for the use of student work samples in scholarly and pedagogical publications, as well as in conference presentations. The Appendix at the end of this paper provides the educator's instructions to students related to the SASB Navigator group assignment. These instructions were communicated both orally in class and via email to all students.

4. METHOD

As sources of qualitative data, this paper uses samples of student-submitted work and instructor's personal accounts of student project outcomes and potential for improvement of the assignment in the future. Autoethnography as a method (Dey, 2002) refers to the personal accounts of the instructor related to student work on the assignment. Hand-written notes were taken during and after the fall 2020 semester by the instructor, in a diary. In this diary, the instructor wrote down her observations on the quality of student work and suggestions for future improvements in communication to students about the nature of the SASB Navigator group assignment. Autoethnography is "an attempt to understand and interpret" (Day, 2002, p. 108) a particular phenomenon, in this case students' performance at a group assignment on sustainability accounting. Hermeneutic assumptions of the subjectivity of both the researcher (here, the instructor) and the research subjects (here, the students) are present in autoethnography, according to Dey. Unlike ethnography (Zou, 2021), autoethnography focuses on the accounts of some phenomenon via reflections provided by one person – the instructor and author of the diary.

5. SAMPLES FROM STUDENT WORK AND INSTRUCTOR'S AUTOETHNOGRAPHY REFLECTIONS

The instructor's prior expectations of student execution of the assignment, i. e. assignment output quality, before the assignment were moderate. The reason for this was that the instructor had noticed a moderate level of scholarly aptitude among the student population at the university. The instructor's prior expectations of overall student interest in the topic were high because of the educator's perception of a high lack of global travel experience and international competencies among the student population at the university. An international company topic assignment was, therefore, assumed to pique the interest of students who had seldom travelled abroad.

The seven questions below come from the SASB Navigator group assignment described in the Appendix. The actual assignment contained twelve questions. This paper only presents the first seven questions due to the page number limitations of this conference submission. The answers below are samples of select student groups' work. The instructor's reflections from her diary and observations from recent rereads of student answers may be found below. To reiterate, the samples of student work and the instructor's personal accounts constitute the qualitative data for this paper.

Question 1: What is the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB)? (Hint: Visit the www.sasb.org website.).

According to the instructor's diary and recent rereads of student responses, all groups were able to provide acceptable answers to Question 1 by using the SASB's website. Members from some groups quoted the definition of 'SASB' word-for-word, while others paraphrased it with their own words. A few groups' answers were succinct and needed more clarification. For instance, Group B wrote:

The Sustainability Accounting Standards Board is an independent standards board that is accountable for the due process, outcomes, and ratification of the SASB standards, including any changes to the standards.

Group B thus used the word 'SASB' to define 'SASB,' something not recommended when providing a definition. Group J wrote a longer definition, but this group did not perform very well in terms of proper use of English grammar and style:

The SASB is an independent standard's board which enables businesses worldwide to identify, manage and report on sustainable financial material to investors. The standards board is based upon extended feedback from companies or any market participant to ensure the publicly documented process is clear and transparent.

Finding definitions of terms online is an essential skill for undergraduate students in any subject area. One might expect that students do well on definition-types of questions when access to the Internet is allowed, while working on the assignment.

Question 2: Why is the work of the SASB important given that sustainability accounting is optional and not mandatory (financial accounting is mandatory for companies)?

Group E provided the following answer:

The SASB offers information to investors beyond financial accounting in order to make informed decisions about their sustainability.

Group M responded:

Sustainability is a growing concern for everyone. When investors buy into a business, they want to know that it is a good investment. If they are able to see how sustainable the company is, it could affect their choice to buy in.

The instructor noted that all groups managed to articulate why the work of the SASB was important and significant. Some groups provided more laconic answers than others; however, given the growing importance of sustainability discourse in the media and in undergraduate accounting, business, and other classes, it was expected that students provided relevant answers to this question.

Question 3: What is the SASB Materiality Map? (Hint: go to <https://materiality.sasb.org/> and click on the column headings (the SASB sectors) to see the SASB industries within them and the metrics specific to each industry). For example, if you click on the last sector, Transportation, one of the industries within it is Automobiles. If you look below Automobiles, Product Safety is one of the 'general issue categories' (column 2 of the Map) considered material, i. e. important, in the Automobile industry.

Group H wrote:

The SASB Materiality Map identifies sustainability issues that are likely to affect the financial condition or operating performance of companies within an industry.

Group P provided the following answer:

The Materiality map identifies the issues that may affect the financial condition or the way that a company is performing in an industry. On this map is not only tells you about one industry, it shows the sector level map and also the industry level map. This Map is used as a tool that identifies and compares disclosure topics. The topics would be different across all of the different companies and industries.

Group J wrote:

The work that the SASB offers to businesses is still important because sustainability accounting has both confirmatory and predictive value, meaning it can be used to evaluate past and future performance of a company's decision process. The SASB's approach to sustainability accounting consists of defining operational metrics on material, industry-specific sustainability topics that are likely to affect current or future financial value. All market participants should understand the foundation and importance of the SASB work.

The answers of Groups H and P above could have been more elaborate given that this was a group assignment with mostly three students per group. The assignment's instructions did not specify the number of sentences, at the minimum level, the answers needed to contain. The instructor noted that in future semesters, she could consider specifying the approximate number of sentences the answers should contain. Group J's quote shows that this group had consulted the SASB Conceptual Framework (SASB, 2017) that mentions for instance, 'confirmatory and predictive value.'

Question 4: With your groupmate(s), choose **one** non-U.S., i.e. foreign, company from the file attached called “Foreign Companies Registered and Reporting to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission... as of 2015” (<https://www.sec.gov/divisions/corpfin/internatl/foreignalpha2015.pdf>). What is the name of this company and what country is it from?

The student groups chose a variety of companies: Toyota Motor, Japan; China Eastern Airlines; Sony, Japan; Honda Motor, Japan, and others. A couple of groups selected Canadian companies. Most groups, however, chose a Japanese company, perhaps because when the instructor explained the project in class, she gave an example with a Japanese car manufacturer – Toyota Motor. The instructor realizes that students had a big choice of countries and companies to choose from and that students could have selected countries from Africa and Europe for instance, not primarily from Japan. Sometimes, students feel like they should adhere too closely to examples given in class, something that the instructor considers as lack of self-confidence in students. The instructor noted in her diary that in future semesters, she will make a point to mention to students that they should feel free to select companies from a variety of countries and industries.

Question 5: Sign in the SASB Navigator database at <https://navigator.sasb.org/> with your username and password provided by the SASB (in the next 3-4 days, you will receive an email from the SASB with your login credentials).

About 50% of the students obtained timely access to the SASB Navigator database. This was largely because these students clicked on the password activation link within a few days of receipt of the email from the SASB. The rest of the students had issues with expired password activation links since they had not clicked on the link in a timely manner. The instructor had to request new password activation links for these students from the SASB. The instructor noted in her diary that in future semesters, she should warn the class, both verbally and in writing, to click on the password activation link within a couple of days of receipt of that email, to avoid similar problems.

Question 6: Look for the company that you chose in Question 4 in ‘company search’ (not in ‘industry search’) of the database. If the company is not in the SASB Navigator database, you can choose another company and try Question 6 again. The reason the company is not in the database may be that the company has delisted from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) since 2015 (Note: A screen print is provided below.). If you cannot find a company, you can look for example for Honda Motor, Toyota Motor, Canon, Sony, or Kyocera. These happen to be Japanese companies and they are filers with the U.S. SEC and as such, they should be in the SASB Navigator database.

Most groups provided adequate answers to Question 6. For instance, Group J provided the following image from the SASB Navigator database related to the Honda Motor Co. (HMC) (Image 1):

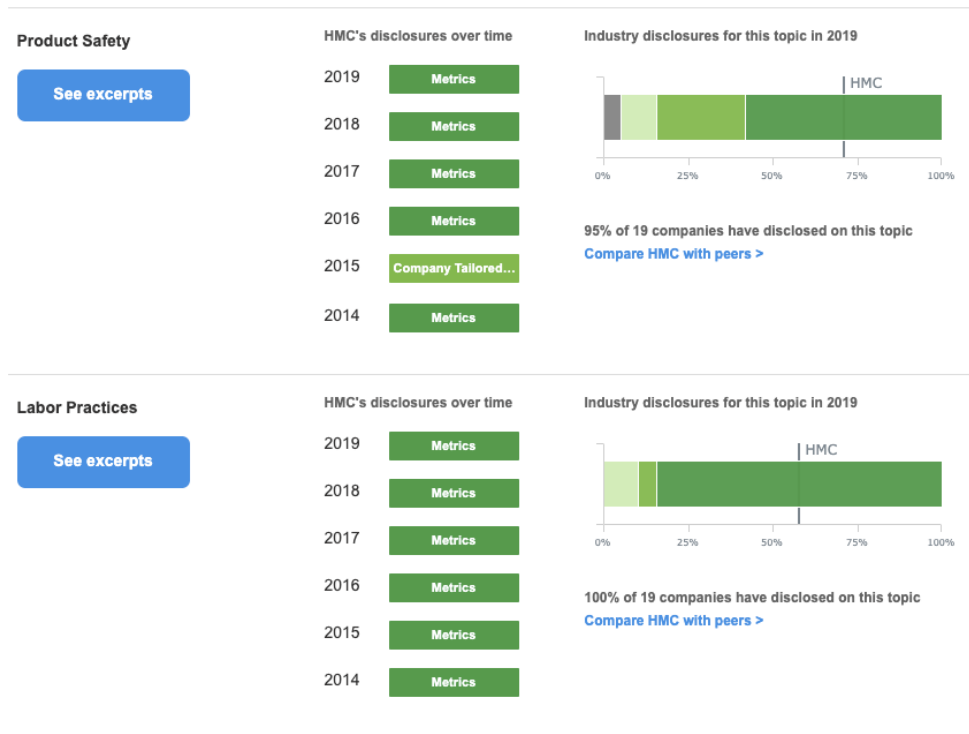


Image 1: Product Safety on Honda Motor Co. (HMC)

However, some groups did not provide satisfactory answers to Question 6. For instance, Group P wrote:

The Sustainability Accounting Standards Board connects businesses and investors on the financial impacts of sustainability. Companies like GM, Merck, Nike and JetBlue were early adopters of the SASB guidelines, using the provisional standards to report on material ESG issues.

In addition, Group M wrote:

There was no disclosure analysis available for the Canadian National Railway, so I looked for Honda Motor.

What one may observe from this answer is that not all students follow assignment instructions closely. To remedy for this, instructors need to have students practice the skill of following instructions more often. It is also good practice to provide students with examples of prior students' work on the same project, at different grade levels (e.g., A, B, C, D, and F), for students to see examples of what excellent, good, and poor answers look like. Providing such examples would reinforce the awareness of the skill of following instructions.

Question 7: What information is available on the company's sustainability disclosures from the last one or two years? (Hint: 'Disclosure' means information that a company shares in its annual reports, quarterly reports, etc.). Such disclosures would be on environmental, social capital, human capital, governance, and innovation issues, (the first column of the SASB Materiality Map). Give examples, such as print screens/photos of graphs or tables that you see on the SASB Navigator. Alternatively, your answer may be in the form of a narrative.

(Hint 1: To do a screen print on a PC, go to the Start button and search for Snipping Tool. Click on +New and select the area you want to copy and paste in your Word document.)

(Hint 2: To do a screen print on a Mac, Press Cmd + Shift + 4 and draw a rectangle across your screen that includes what you want a picture of. Your screen print will save in your Desktop folder. Drag the screen print file into your Word document.)

Image 2 provides an example from Group B's work on Toyota Motor (TM):



Image 2: Toyota Motor (TM) on Fuel Economy and Use-phase Emissions

Group H provided the visual in Image 3 for the Sony Corp. (SNE):

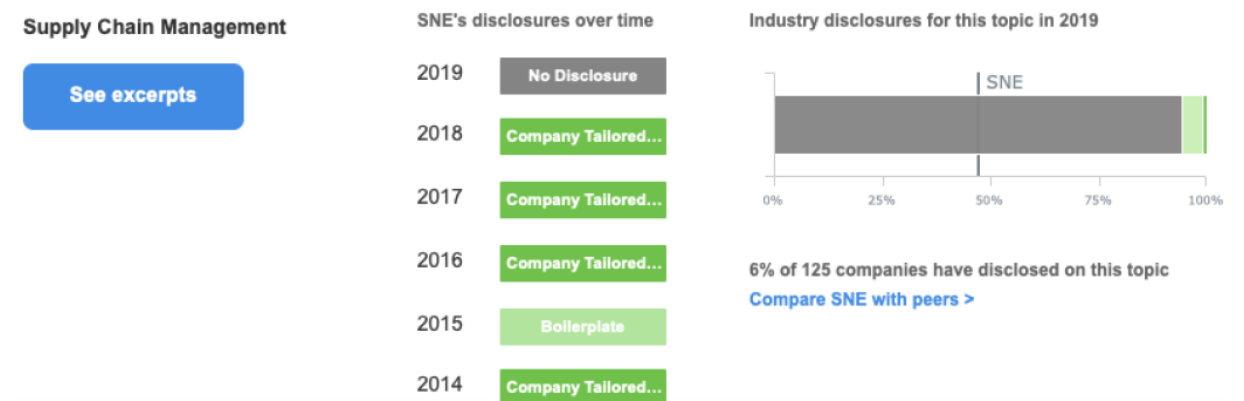


Image 3: Sony Corp. (SNE) on Supply Chain Management

Group P was not clear what company(-ies) their visuals referred to. In the previous question, Question 6, Group P had mentioned four companies, rather than one, as requested by the instructor: GM, Merck, Nike, and JetBlue. One of the four visuals that this group provided as an answer to Question 7 is found in Image 4.

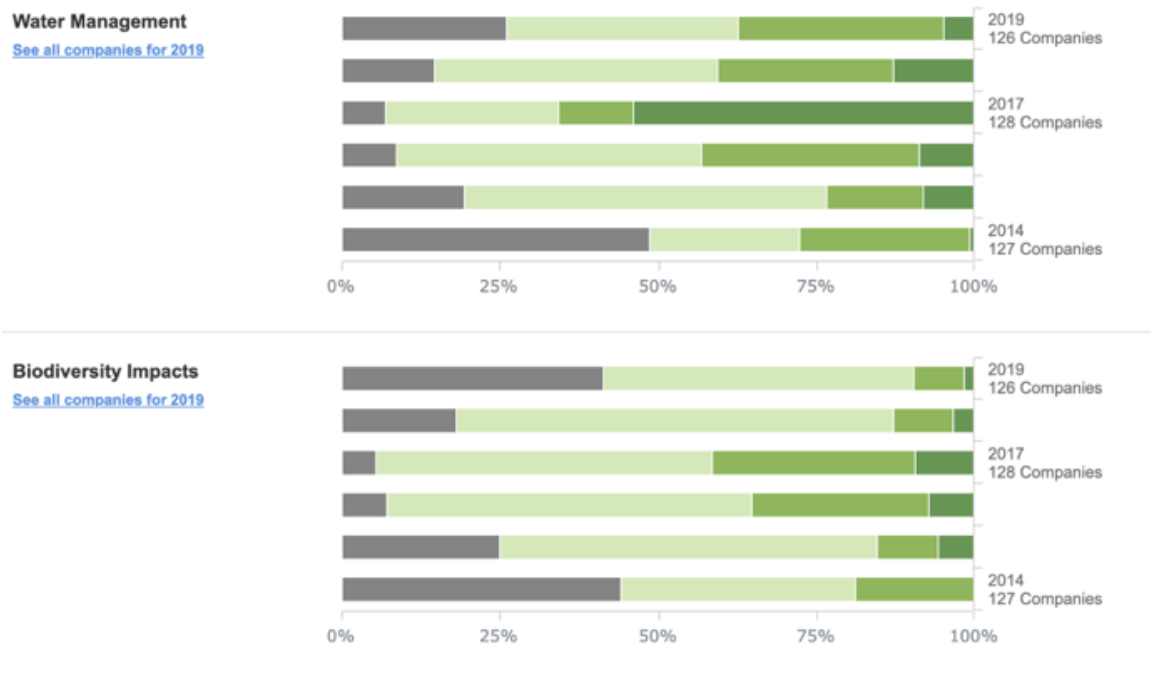


Image 4: Water Management and Biodiversity Impacts of a Company

The mistake in Question 6 led Group P to a mistake in Question 7. This is a follow-through error that could have been avoided by paying closer attention to assignment instructions.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper provided an accounting educator's personal account of preparing, assigning, and assessing a Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Navigator database group project to two sections of her *Introduction to Financial Accounting* class in the fall 2020 semester at a university in the North-Eastern United States. The paper used samples of student-submitted work and the autoethnography method as sources of qualitative data. Hand-written notes about the group project were taken during and after the fall 2020 semester in an instructor diary. Recent rereads of student projects were also done. The research question was: How did students do at a hands-on research team project, using the SASB Navigator database? The research results showed that generally, the group project met the educator's prior expectations from students in terms of assignment execution, assignment output quality (moderate quality expectations), and overall student interest in the topic (high interest expectations). This research introduced the SASB Navigator database to undergraduate accounting students and opened venues for them to explore new international business and accounting perspectives. These international perspectives focused on ESG issues, and they were made possible by the selection of a foreign company listed on the U.S. stock exchanges – the NASDAQ or the NYSE. Throughout the team project, students practiced time management skills, written communication skills, teamwork capabilities, and critical thinking skills. This paper contributed to the extant literature on the pedagogy of environmental and social accounting (Grinnell & Hunt, 2000; Hazelton & Haigh, 2010; Mathews, 2001; Mangion, 2006; McGuigan et al., 2017; Sefcik et al., 1997; Sheehan et al., 2022) by focusing on student ESG database usage from the end user's perspective and company analysis report writing in the form of answers to specific questions asked by the instructor.

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APPENDIX

Instructor's instructions to students related to the SASB Navigator group assignment

The following is an email message from the instructor to the students, in preparation for the assignment.

Dear class:

I have placed you in small groups in alphabetical order, to work on the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Navigator database assignment. In the next 3-4 days, you will be given usernames and passwords by the SASB to access the SASB Navigator database. You are strongly encouraged to change your password upon original login. The SASB Navigator contains information on the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosures of companies listed on the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). This means that these companies are traded on the NASDAQ (tech companies) or the NY Stock Exchange (NYSE). These companies are 'SEC filers' since they must file documents with the SEC on a regular basis.

Your group needs to answer questions and email me all their answers. One email per group will suffice. I have provided the students' names and email addresses for each group.

If you still have any questions after reading all the files in the Midterm Exam Info folder on Canvas, please do not hesitate to email me.

Below are the detailed instructions given to students for the group project.

Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Navigator Database Group Project

Dear class:

With your groupmates, please respond to the following questions and email their answers to me as a Word document attachment.

Questions:

- 1) What is the SASB? (Hint: visit the www.sasb.org website).
- 2) Why is the work of the SASB important given that sustainability accounting is optional and not mandatory (financial accounting is mandatory for companies)?
- 3) What is the SASB Materiality Map? (Hint: go to <https://materiality.sasb.org/> and click on the column headings (the SASB sectors) to see the SASB industries within them and the metrics specific to each industry). For example, if you click on the last sector, Transportation, one of the industries within it is Automobiles. If you look below Automobiles, Product Safety is one of the 'general issue categories' (column 2 of the Map) considered material, i. e. important, in the Automobile industry.
- 4) With your groupmate(s), choose **one** non-U.S., i.e. foreign, company from the file attached to this message called, "Foreign Companies Registered and Reporting to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission... as of 2015" (<https://www.sec.gov/divisions/corpfin/international/foreignalpha2015.pdf>). What is the name of this company and what country is it from?
- 5) Sign in the SASB Navigator database at <https://navigator.sasb.org/> with your username and password provided by the SASB (In the next 3-4 days, you will receive an email from the SASB with your login credentials.).
- 6) Look for the company that you chose in Question 4 in 'company search' (not in 'industry search') of the database. If the company is not in the SASB Navigator database, you can choose another company and try Question 6 again. The reason the company is not in the database may be that the company has delisted from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) since 2015 (Note: A screen print is provided below.). If you cannot find a company, you can look for example for Honda Motor, Toyota Motor, Canon, Sony, or Kyocera. These happen to be Japanese companies and they are filers with the U.S. SEC and as such, they should be in the SASB Navigator database.
- 7) What information is available on the company's sustainability disclosures from the last one or two years? (Hint: 'Disclosure' means information that a company shares in its annual reports, quarterly reports, etc.). Such disclosures would be on environmental, social capital, human capital, governance, and innovation issues, (the first column of the SASB Materiality Map). Give examples, such as print screens/photos of graphs or tables that you see on the SASB Navigator. Alternatively, your answer may be in the form of a narrative.
(Hint 1: To do a screen print on a PC, go to the Start button and search for Snipping Tool. Click on +New and select the area you want to copy and paste in your Word document.).
(Hint 2: To do a screen print on a Mac, Press Cmd + Shift + 4 and draw a rectangle across your screen that includes what you want a picture of. Your screen print will save in your Desktop folder. Drag the screen print file into your Word document.).

Methods of Applying IR4.0 Technologies in Improving Organizational Structure and Positions: The Case of Malaysian Public Agencies

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Abstract

This article explores the methods of applying Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) technologies in improving the organizational structure and positions of Malaysian public agencies. Socio-technical Systems Theory, Learning Organization Theory, and Theory of Disruption are discussed as a Theoretical Framework of this article. Employing the qualitative methodology of grounded theory, data was collected from public officials through interviews and a focus group discussion. The result shows seven themes emerged in two categories; management and technology. The themes in the management category are top management leadership and strategic organizational planning, while for the technology category, the themes are big data analytics, system integration, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, and 3D printing. Four research propositions have been developed to suggest the relationship between methods of applying IR4.0 technologies and improving organizational structure and positions. The research provides empirical evidence on methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in public agencies, specifically to improve organizational structure and positions.

Keywords: IR4.0, Industry 4.0, organizational structure and positions, public agency, Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Government has allocated 36.3 percent of its RM307.5 billion 2021 budget for the emolument of public officials and pensioners (Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia, 2020). The allocation is rising steadily since calculations are based on the overall number of public servants, annual increments, and retirement payments. The government has since controlled the number of public positions to 1.71 million, limiting any creation of new positions except through replacement or redeployment of current staff. The same policy applies to all restructuring proposals of public agencies (Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia, 2021).

However, with the growing number of citizens and the expectation to perform more functions, public agencies are asking for more positions, pushing the government to explore the possibility of using IR4.0 technologies to resolve the issue. Studies have shown that these technologies increase revenue and decrease the need for human workforce (Anshari, 2020; Braccini & Margherita, 2018; Kagermann et al., 2013), and governments worldwide have taken the initiative to integrate IR4.0 technological approaches into their policy planning (Yang & Gu, 2021). The Malaysian Government announced the implementation of the Public Sector Big Data (DRSA) pilot project in 2013 (Hamzah et al., 2020) and three national policies based on the use of IR4.0 technologies, namely the National Digital Economy Blueprint, the National Fourth Industrial Revolution Policy, and the 12th Malaysia Plan (Unit Perancang Ekonomi, 2021). The use of IR4.0 technologies in public service has been emphasized in these policies.

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Studies discussing the application of IR4.0 technologies in improving organizational structure and positions are plenty, but the focus is limited to the business sector or private entities (Braccini & Margherita, 2018; Cimini et al., 2021; Davutoglu, 2020), leaving a gap in studies for the public sector. Moreover, the objective of business entities and public entities is different since the aim of increasing revenue and eliminating costs may not be applied to public agencies. Gajdzik et al. (2021) emphasize that the use of IR4.0 technologies is uniquely determined by the nature of the industry and the organization itself; therefore, the use of technologies in public agencies depends upon the need of the public sector. Hence, this study focuses on one aspect of the sphere by identifying the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in the public sector, especially in improving organizational structure and positions. This study will contribute to the literature on IR4.0 and public service, as well as increase the understanding of how the application of IR4.0 improves organizational structure and positions in public agencies, subsequently answering the research question: *what are the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in improving organizational structure and positions of Malaysian public agencies?*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Industrial Revolution

The world has seen four industrial revolutions. The First Industrial Revolution started during the mid-18 century in England with the invention of the steam engine, substituting the use of manpower for machines (Pereira & Romero, 2017). The Second Industrial Revolution began almost 100 years later, with the introduction of electricity, thus flourishing mass manufacturing (Jain & Ajmera, 2021). The invention of microchips marked the Third Industrial Revolution at the end of the 20th century, changing technologies from analog to digital, introducing personal computers, the Internet, handphones, robots, and automation (Rymarczyk, 2020). The Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0), also known as Industry 4.0, was introduced in German in 2011 as an initiative by the government to develop the industrial sector. The initiatives became revolutionized, mainly because the technologies blurred the line between the physical, digital, and biological worlds (Poszytek, 2021).

Among the critical characteristics of IR4.0 technologies are digitalization, optimization, human-machine interaction, automatic data exchange, and communication advancement (Roblek et al., 2016). These characters serve as elements for nine pillar technologies of IR4.0: big data analytics, autonomous robots, simulation, system integration, the Internet of Things (IoT), cyber security, cloud computing, additive manufacturing or 3D printing, and augmented reality (Rüßmann et al., 2015; Yang & Gu, 2021). These technologies developed into other technologies with numerous applications, such as artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous car, and blockchain (Rymarczyk et al., 2019).

Parallel to the effect of other industrial revolutions, IR4.0 transformed the way jobs are done, bringing changes in job design, job environment, and job structure (Herrero et al., 2020; Kagermann et al., 2013). Its technologies are disruptive because they change all production aspects, from product design to marketing to after-sales services (Miśkiewicz & Wolniak, 2020). Such changes divide the work structure into two continuums, one of the high-skill workers in an organic structure and another of low-skill workers with high possibility of being replaced by machines (Wilkesmann & Wilkesmann, 2018), as well as possibly changing the structure of an organization (Davutoglu, 2020).

2.2 Methods of applying IR4.0 technologies

The discussion on methods of applying IR4.0 in organizations mainly falls into two categories; management and technology. Regarding management, the literature is divided between the role of government and the role of the organization. The government is expected to develop and implement public policies to assist businesses in adapting to the technologies (Erro-Garcés & Aranaz-Núñez, 2020; Krishnan et al., 2021; Reis et al., 2021), provide advanced IT infrastructure and reliable digital network at a competitive price (Jain & Ajmera, 2021), and aggressively prepare for the coming of IR4.0 especially in developing countries (Erasmus, 2021). While for the organization, an organization must have strategies or roadmaps to adopt IR4.0 technologies (Erboz, 2020; Nagy et al., 2022; Shinkevich et al., 2021), recognize top management as the primary enabler of IR4.0 implementation (Krishnan et al., 2021), sufficient financial support from the management, continuous training and reskilling in operating as well as maintaining the technologies (Jain & Ajmera, 2021), improve its technological readiness (Hizam-Hanafiah et al., 2020), practice organizational learning (Belinski et al., 2020), and engage in collaborative employment relation with the union (Rutherford & Frangi, 2020).

The technology category refers to the use of IR4.0 technologies in industries such as advanced robots being operated to perform repetitive tasks, cloud computing maintaining and monitoring operations remotely, additive

manufacturing producing 3D printing of high-demand products and critical parts, augmented reality provides an almost real-life working environment, horizontal and vertical integrations using AI are utilized to disseminate knowledge to employees, IoT is merged with drones for surveillance activities, and big data analytics is generating real-time forecasts (Lepore et al., 2021). In addition to that, advancement in cyber-physical devices is making autonomous vehicles possible, nanomaterials are producing products of lightweight in the automotive industry, construction industry, health industry, and environmental protection, blockchain is developed for secured online transactions, and digital twin is creating digital simulation model (Rymarczyk, 2020). To apply IR4.0 technologies, companies start with automation before selecting only the most relevant technologies, and not utilizing all the technologies at once (Szabo et al., 2020).

2.3 Organization and the role of human resource practitioners

An organization is formed to execute a function or achieve a goal, and the structure is designed to ensure that the objective is attainable. Mintzberg (1979) proposes the Five Organizational Structure Model of organization, based on five main components: the Operating Core, Middle Line, Strategic Apex, Support Staff, and Technostructure. From the components, five structures of organizations are developed: simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form, and adhocracy, with each structure being dominant in one component depending on the nature of business, the time, and the environment (Lunenborg, 2012).

In describing the organizational design, Galbraith (2002) suggests the Star Model with five dependable dimensions: strategy, people, structure, reward, and process, with strategy taking the lead by determining the direction of an organization. Explaining organizational structure and positions, Cimini et al. (2021) refer to Galbraith's structure as having two primary constructs: number of hierarchy (Pugh et al., 1968) and span of control (Ouchi & Dowling, 1974), while process refers to the design of positions within an organization and relates to the roles of individual position. Changes in structure and positions in an organization are influenced by external factors such as globalization, technology, customer, and competition, as well as internal factors such as development strategy, type of activity, inefficient structure, and qualifications of its members (Kalowski, 2015).

Organizing structural changes, redesigning job descriptions, reviewing individual roles, and determining the number of positions needed are the responsibilities of human resource practitioners, especially during IR4.0 because of the socio-technical elements associated with adopting new technologies (Sony & Naik, 2019). Human resources practitioners must strategize executing change management (Lord, 2020) due to the possibility of reducing the current workforce (Ziaei Nafchi & Mohelská, 2021). Other than providing reskilling training (Kiss & Muha, 2018), human resource practitioners must be able to think strategically and act as change agents (Dhanpat et al., 2020; Poba-Nzaou et al., 2020; Yusuf et al., 2017) to keep their relevancy in the structure since routine HR tasks can easily be automated using IR4.0 technologies (Drljača et al., 2020).

In Malaysian public services, the task of evaluating organizational change in structure and positions lies on a central agency at the federal level, whose functions include developing human resources policies for public agencies. Although human resource practitioners are empowered to manage within their respective agencies and have the freedom to plan for their structure and positions, the implementation is subject to approval from the federal level as a result of financial implications sustained by the government on the process (Bahagian Pembangunan Organisasi, 2020).

2.4 Theories on IR4.0, organizational structure and positions

Three theories serve as a framework for this study. The first is Socio-technical Systems Theory (STS), which suggests that an organization is a combination of social and technical parts and is open to its environment (Trist et al., 1993). The social element of people and their relationships, and technical elements such as digital applications, equipment, and processes, must work together to achieve the objective (Appelbaum, 1997). An enlarged perspective on STS and Industry 4.0 by Cimini et al. (2021) suggest that a lean organizational structure supports the effective adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies, and technologies should not guide the restructuring of the organization but rather leverage them to make the organization capable of adapting to the new process by giving ample training. This study relates to the theory by identifying socio-technical elements in public agencies and how these elements determine organizational structure and positions.

Learning Organization Theory proposes that to be competitive and achieve their goals in changing environments, organizations must learn to change by making conscious choices in response to the environment (Senge, 1996). Learning organization has five disciplines: system thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning, which are necessary if the organizations are to learn (Fillion et al., 2014). Members of learning

organizations continuously challenge themselves to be more innovative and adaptive to the changing environments, thus moving away from simple employee training into organizational problem-solving (Dawood et al., 2015). Since IR4.0 technologies are new and keep developing, this theory relates to organizations' need for continuous learning and constant reskilling to survive (Belinski et al., 2020; Piątkowski, 2020) and ultimately affects the organizational structure by altering work process and job design.

Another theory that relates to this study is the Theory of Disruption, which states that technological advancement is causing disruptive changes in the world (Christensen & Raynor, 2003). IR4.0 technologies are indeed disruptive technologies, it changes almost everything related to the way businesses are done (Herrero et al., 2020; Kagermann et al., 2013; Miśkiewicz & Wolniak, 2020), and it keeps on growing and creating more disruption to older technologies (Yang & Gu, 2021). Since the study is about IR4.0 technologies and disruption impact on organizational structure and positions, the Theory of Disruption is suitable for explaining the relationship.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was exploratory and conducted using a qualitative approach. It aimed to identify the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in improving organizational structure and positions in Malaysian public agencies. Given the lack of studies in the public sector addressing the issue of organizational structure and positions during the IR4.0 era, this study adopted the grounded theory research design by Glasser and Strauss (1967) and an inductive approach using Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. A combination of convenience, purposive, and theoretical sampling strategies was employed to ensure that all informants could contribute considerably to the study (Bryman, 2008; Miller & Salkind, 2002). Convenience sampling was employed during pilot interviews because the informants were easy to access, available, and willing to participate. In selecting informants after the pilot interviews, purposive sampling was applied to identify information-rich or experienced informants based on the following criteria: (1) officers in Federal Ministry/Department, State Government, Local Government, or statutory body under government's control; (2) middle to top-level managers, of Grade 48 to Grade JUSA C (top position of the public sector); (3) occupying management positions or human resource or organizational development; (4) having at least two years of experience in organizational development. As for theoretical sampling, the technique was utilized during the selection of informants for focus group discussion by limiting the informants to Federal Ministry/Department responsible for policy formulation.

In the beginning, two sessions of in-depth pilot interviews were conducted, and the questions were revised based on those interviews. The final interview guide has eight semi-structured questions, including introductory questions. A formal request was sent via email to 23 heads of agencies, but only 22 agreed to participate, with one agency refusing due to managerial issues. Within four months, 11 sessions of semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 participants, and a focus group discussion of 10 informants was organized. The profile of informants is shown in Table 1. Of all the interview sessions, eight sessions were conducted face-to-face, while three interviews were conducted online. Face-to-face interviews were held in informants' offices all around Malaysia. The interviews ranged from fifty minutes to one hour and twenty minutes, and all 16 informants agreed to an audio recording. Meanwhile, a focus group discussion was organized at a later stage of data collection, focusing on informants located around Putrajaya (federal government administrative centre) and Kuala Lumpur (capital of Malaysia), as well as a triangulation method to increase the validity of the data. The discussion took three hours, and all informants agreed that the session was video recorded. All questions during interviews and focus group discussion were asked in an open-ended manner and emailed in advance, and the questions were the same for all informants. The recordings were transcribed verbatim into text for data analysis and coded using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) open, axis, and selective coding. *Atlas.ti* software was utilized to help manages the data and ensure all relevant data were coded. Data saturation was reached during the interviews when no new code emerged (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) and confirmed during focus group discussion.

Table 1. Profile of informants (n = 26)

No.	Code	Job Function	Grade	Type of Agency	Sector of Agency
1	B1	HR	48	Statutory Body	Economy
2	B2	OD	52	Statutory Body	Agriculture
3	B3	Management	48	Statutory Body	Development Authority
4	B4	Management	54	Statutory Body	Education
5	B5	HR	JUSA C	Statutory Body	Education
6	B6	HR	52	Statutory Body	Education
7	P1	Management	52	Local Government	City Council
8	P2	Management	54	Local Government	City Council
9	P3	Management	48	Local Government	City Council

10	N1	HR	54	State Government	Administration
11	N2	OD	52	State Government	Administration
12	N3	HR	54	State Government	Administration
13	N4	OD	52	State Government	Administration
14	N5	OD	48	State Government	Administration
15	N6	HR	54	State Government	Administration
16	K1	OD	52	Federal Ministry	Infrastructure
17	K2	OD	54	Federal Ministry	Education
18	K3	HR	54	Federal Ministry	Economy
19	K4	OD	52	Federal Ministry	Security
20	K5	OD	52	Federal Ministry	Health
21	K6	OD	52	Federal Ministry	Security
22	K7	OD	52	Federal Ministry	Security
23	J1	HR	54	Federal Department	Infrastructure
24	J2	HR	48	Federal Department	Infrastructure
25	J3	OD	48	Federal Department	Security
26	J4	HR	48	Federal Department	Administration

Note: HR, human resource; OD, organizational development.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of STS Theory, Learning Organization Theory, and Theory of Disruption as guidance in understanding the relationship between humans, organizations, and technologies, assisted in keeping the focus when encountering rich sources of data from the interviews. Since discussions on IR4.0 and organizational development are plenty but the subject of public agencies is new, the use of these theories as a theoretical framework greatly supports the initial stage of data analysis.

Based on data analysis, seven themes emerged which can be categorized into management and technology. For the management category, the themes are top management leadership and strategic organizational planning. As for the technology category, the five themes that emerged are big data analytics, system integration, cloud computing, the IoT, and 3D printing. These themes are developed into four research propositions.

4.1 Management category

In the Malaysian public sector, each agency is headed by a Head of Agency, who is responsible for every single aspect of the organization. The head assumes managerial function, usually referred to as the top management, and is structurally assisted by at least two deputies; one oversees the organization's core function, and the other manages the support services assisting the core functions.

4.1.1 Top management leadership

This study finds that top management leadership is the most critical managerial method in applying IR4.0 technologies to improve organizational structure and positions, in line with Herrero et al. (2020) and Krishnan et al. (2021). Without top management leadership, consent, or commitment, the technologies can neither be applied nor impact structure or positions.

“For me, the most important is a blessing from top management, because when he inspires, and tells us that is the way he wants things done, he will make sure the whole agency moves towards that” (Informant K1).

It is safe to assert that the ability to foresee, conceptualize and commit to new technologies lies only in leaders with future-looking characteristics. These leaders can see the future beyond the limit of time and know exactly what strategies to use to create that future. The leaders start by clarifying the organization's direction and be firm in ensuring the subordinates work towards the direction.

“For me, the first thing is a direction. Based on the direction, we will review our work processes to make sure the processes support the direction, from that, we will know what (positions) we need, and how many (number of positions)” (Informant B2).

“In allocating positions, the top management must be firm, we have to convince them that IR4.0 technologies have taken over the human jobs” (Informant B5).

In addition to providing direction, top management must realize that technologies need investment, and rational budget decisions must be made. Since change takes time, top management must maintain working towards the direction.

4.1.2 Strategic Organizational Planning

The study shows that strategic organizational planning is one of the managerial methods of applying IR 4.0 technologies to improve organizational structure and positions. The strategy must come first, especially in the constantly changing environment of IR4.0 (Nagy et al., 2022).

“... we must have strategic planning, ranging from five to ten years. Only then will we be able to plan for human resources management. The plan must cover many years, to be able to see which positions are to freeze, and which are to trade off; these must be included in the strategic plan. That is why a strategic plan is very important, from the plan, we will know what technology to use, and how it affects the positions” (Informant N4).

“We have White Paper on the ministry’s policy, in which we have outlined all the strategic plan, ministry’s plan as well as all other agencies under this ministry. And the plan is in line with current needs because, in IR4.0, the most important domain is cyber security, so the ministry is focusing on the development in that domain” (Informant K6).

Organizational planning in government agencies is usually documented in strategic planning, covering a duration of three to five years. In ensuring that the use of IR4.0 technologies is translated into a workable plan, agencies must develop a strategic organizational plan that specifies the need and methods to use technologies. Since the preference for technology is determined by the nature of service in a particular agency, this plan will identify which kind of technologies to use and for what purpose,

4.2 Technology category

As the nature of business is different between the public and private sector, along with the fact that the application of IR4.0 technologies are exclusively determined by the organization itself and might not be the same for other organizations (Gajdzik et al., 2021), this study finds that public agencies are not applying all technologies, and the application is different based on the function of agencies.

4.2.1 Big data analytics

In line with government initiatives for national-level big data analytics (Hamzah et al., 2020), this study finds many instances of using big data analytics in public agencies. Using big data analytics, usually combined with the IoT and AI, improves organizational structure and positions.

“One of the data analytics we made is for staff movement – we can see the grade, the age, the duration of service, to the extent that we can analyze by specific position, which PTJ (office) and so on, so with data analytic, we can plan the actual need because we have to maintain an acceptable ratio of lecturers and students” (Informant B5).

Data analytics can predict future scenarios so that HR managers can strategically plan the need for new positions. It affects intake, for example by ensuring that intake is made only when necessary, preventing unnecessary intake such as for facilities under construction. Data analytics also improves organizational structure and positions by replacing routine work predominantly executed by humans, as well as in complex routines with exact precision.

“Before this, in open-up surgery, we need five specialists, but with this AI technology, only two people are needed. Then we can determine that technologies minimize the need for positions (in the agency), minimizing the overall medical impact or implication. Only a minimum number of positions is needed to handle the whole thing” (Informant K5).

The use of AI had significantly reduced the need for traditional human positions since technology can replace humans. Thus, a lesser number of positions are needed to execute more and more functions, improving the organizational structure.

4.2.2 System integration

Judging from the size of public agencies and the rate of digitalization initiatives, the study finds that public agencies require system integration. Applications are built internally, serving purposes and solving managerial problems, but connecting all the applications is a real challenge since the applications are not integrated and function independently.

“We need system integration. In this agency, we have a lot of systems, but the systems are not integrated. If we can have an integrated system, I believe there are areas where we don't need many positions” (Informant B3).

“If we have a well-integrated system, we can share the data, and all departments can use the data without the need to ask the data from the customer anymore, so if an application is filed, we only ask for data, not inside our integrated system” (Informant B1).

The ability to integrate between systems promotes data sharing between government agencies, impacting the current work process. It boosts shorter processes, preventing overlapping procedures in data sharing, and eventually resulting in a lesser number of positions needed in executing a task in multiple agencies.

4.2.3 Cloud computing

This study shows that cloud computing can solve critical managerial issues of public agencies such as lack of positions, inefficient work processes, need for huge record storage, more extensive working areas, and time wasted.

“In data storage, cloud computing uses servers, so the officers in charge of maintaining records can be limited. Now we have two positions in charge of records, before this, we needed five positions” (Informant B2).

“We need cloud computing for data storage because we need to review the data when an agency is applying for restructuring. If we are using a manual system, it will take a lot of time to search for a physical file, if everything is in one system, one place, we can access the system to check, update and save” (Informant N3).

With cloud computing, the average time in managing government records becomes much shorter, retrieving time becomes faster, and storing old records becomes easier. It greatly lessens the need for positions in charge of record keeping process. In addition to that, cloud computing ensures a faster way of learning institutional memory by new officers. There will be a lesser need for face-to-face job training by senior members of organizations. In maximizing the benefits of cloud computing, the Malaysian Government has its cloud computing service known as *MyGovCloud@PDSA*, an initiative to execute the MyDigital policies (Unit Perancang Ekonomi, 2021).

4.2.4 The internet of things

There are a lot of benefits in applying the IoT in public agencies. Technology is changing the work process in multiple sectors such as agriculture, enforcement, and security. The work process will ultimately change the organizational structure and the need for positions.

“In agriculture, the IoT affects the way process is done, for example, before this, officers needed to collect the data from samples and bring them to the lab for testing, but now, they just insert a tool, and the tool will display all information needed in no time. So, we don't need many positions, the IoT has been able to simplify the way jobs are done, minimize the hassle, and helps in controlling the number of positions needed in our organization” (Informant N3).

“We use the IoT to monitor, we have started using drones to monitor industrial areas, to identify pollution spots, factories releasing harmful smoke – we monitor the water, the air, including seas and rivers, we get the data automatically, so if there is an anomaly, the system triggers the control room, and we can dispatch our officers immediately” (Informant P2).

The use of IoT had reduce lengthy working processes, resulting in a lesser need for positions but at the same time extending the ability of a position to execute more functions. IoT can be applied by wide sectors in government

such as agriculture, enforcement, border security, and weather prediction, thus having the potential of reducing more number of positions needed in exercising specific functions, thus impacting the organizational structure.

4.2.5 3D printing

3D printing is new to public agencies, and this study finds the application of this technology only in the health sector. Still, the impact is significant to the extent that it changes the structure of dentistry and eliminates one particular service. The eliminated positions are then converted to positions essential to the agency.

“Nowadays, we don't need dental therapists anymore, we used to have this position in the dental clinic, making dentures, from last year onwards, we don't have this position anymore, we are slowly phasing out because we are now investing in the 3D printer” (Informant K5).

The study shows that the nature of services offered by government agencies which are mostly related to services with human interaction rather than the production of a physical product, is the factor why government agencies are more relaxed in accepting 3D printing. Still, it offers a huge possibility of impacting the need for positions and improving the organizational structure.

5. CONCLUSION

The finding shows that the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in public agencies are similar to those in private entities (Krishnan et al., 2021; Nagy et al., 2022) in terms of managerial aspects, but differ in terms of technological aspects, but both aspects are influencing organizational structures and positions.

The first theme from the data is the managerial aspect of top management leadership and strategic organizational planning. It shows that the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in public agencies depend on the managerial aspect first because this is where the funding to acquire the technologies come from. Top management must know the technologies' potential, decide on the need, and plan for their use. Furthermore, the blind adoption of technologies is not recommended (Szabo et al., 2020). Studies must be carried out in a particular field to identify what technologies fit the organization best, and the adaptation process must be planned carefully to ensure the full benefits of the technologies. Therefore, the research propositions of this study are:

RP1: Top management leadership has a direct positive relationship to the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in improving organizational structure and positions of public agencies.

RP2: Strategic organizational planning has a direct positive relationship to the methods of applying IR4.0 technologies in improving organizational structure and positions of public agencies.

Regarding technologies suitable for an agency, the finding shows that since public agencies cover vast services, there is so much potential that IR4.0 technologies can improve the organizational structure and optimize the overall number of positions. But still, given the enormous coverage of public services, the reduced number can be channeled to services that need human interaction, because public services are not similar to production lines in factories. For this reason, the authors proposed the following research proposition:

RP3: The higher the use of IR4.0 technologies in public agencies, the higher the possibility of improving organizational structure and positions.

RP4: The higher the use of IR4.0 technologies, the higher the possibility of optimizing public agencies' overall structure and positions.

This study contributes to STS by highlighting the importance of social aspects of public agencies, without which technology will be irrelevant. Social elements in this study are not just the people and their relationships within the organization, but more importantly the leadership aspect of the management who is accountable for preparing strategic planning. As for Learning Organization Theory, this study suggests that management aspects of a visionary leader and strategic planning are added as characteristics of a learning organization because these characteristics will ensure that the organization keeps on learning despite changes in people. This study also strengthens the idea of Disruption Theory by showing that technological advancement is much more disruptive in public services because the coverage of impact encompasses the whole nation.

As for the implication to the government, this study shows that the most crucial aspect is not surviving the IR4.0, but living the era, and strategically planning for the unknown future using technologies. For that reason, the selection of heads of public agencies must be made among future-looking candidates who are willing to adopt and adapt technologies at better speed and take advantage of IR4.0 technologies. These future-looking leaders will strategically design organizational structure and positions based on utilizing advanced technologies, resulting in leaner structure and optimizing positions. The impact will ripple by enabling public agencies to perform more functions with less workforce, and at the same time optimizing the allocated budget for the emolument of public officials, thus increasing the return on investment. This study also indicates that the current restructuring and positions management policy is sufficient in controlling the number of public officials, provided that the technologies are utilized. In terms of methodological impact, this study provides prepositions to be tested in future studies because the methods of applying advanced technologies had been set forth for public agencies. These prepositions suggest certain traits of managerial aspects and a particular pattern of technologies suitable for public agencies.

While for the limitation, the study cannot be generalized to other countries since the study aims to explore a specific issue. Another limitation is that although the study has informants from all levels of public agencies, those informants do not extensively represent all public sector areas, causing some areas not to be represented. Therefore, future studies should focus on other areas of public agencies.

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Accounting Disclosure Principles from Baitulmal, Zakat and Waqf Institutions Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to identify the principles of accounting disclosure from the perspective of Baitulmal, Zakat, and Waqf Institutions. The research data was collected through several interview sessions with fourteen officers from the institutions and three Islamic accounting scholars. The research findings indicated that six principles of accounting disclosure emerged from the interview sessions. The principles are Statement of Shariah Compliance, Statement of Institutional Responsibilities towards Baitulmal, Zakat, and Waqf, Statement of Role of Shariah Advisory Council, Social Accountability, Full Disclosure, and Decision Usefulness. At the end of this paper, theoretical and practical implications, and suggestions for future research were also discussed.

Keywords: Accounting disclosure; Islamic institutions; Islamic accounting; Shariah compliance; accountability

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, government agencies have experienced dramatic growth and are major economic, political and social agents of changes in our society. The agencies are the trustee of public resources such as funds, properties and intangible assets (Engku Ismail, 2019; Ishak Tadin, 1989; Said, Alam, and Johari, 2018). The agencies may be classified as national or state-controlled organizations that established for the socio-economic development of the nation. They discharge the obligation through a sound financial management system that complies with prescribed regulations (Engku Ismail, 2019). One of the government agencies is State Baitulmal, Zakat, and Waqf Institutions (BZWI). The institutions are trusted bodies that manage Muslim community funds in each state of Malaysia (Hafiz and Maliah, 2020; Maliah et al., 2016). As the trusted bodies, they have to ensure that their operations are consistent with the Shariah principles and relevant legal provisions (enactments, ordinances and accounting standards) (Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI), 2020; Muhamad Sori, 2017). The compliance is very crucial to meet the rights and expectations of various stakeholders such as zakat payers and recipients, waqf contributors and beneficiaries, resource providers, the government and non-government agencies (NGO), employees, and Muslim community in general. Most importantly, it is to ensure that all BZWI practices fulfil the accountability to Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala (SWT) and accounting practice is a part of the institutions' accountability (Maliah et al., 2016; Patton, 1992; Sinclair, 1995). As mentioned in the Holy Quran, Allah SWT said that:

"Indeed, Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners; and when you judge between people, judge with fairness. What a noble commandment from Allah to you! Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (QS An-Nisa' 4:58).

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In general, accounting practice for an entity including BZWI involves three main areas, namely, recognition, measurement, and disclosure (AAOIFI, 2020; Baydoun and Willett, 2000; Khoramin, 2012). This research focuses on the disclosure issue since it relates directly to the purpose of accounting that is to provide financial information about reporting entities that is useful to relevant users in making decisions (Bergmann, 2009; Hafiz and Maliah, 2020). Although the main two principles of accounting disclosure, namely, full disclosure and social accountability have been widely discussed in Islamic accounting literature previously (Baydoun & Willet, 2000; Khoramin, 2012; Lewis, 2001), additional principles of accounting disclosure that applicable to BZWI need to be identified. It is also reported that the level of accounting disclosure among BZWI in Malaysia is less than satisfactory and suggestions made by prior studies regarding the disclosure are too general (Maliah et al., 2016). Considering the limitations in the current literature, the purpose of this research was to identify the principles of accounting disclosure from the perspective of BZWI. The principles are important to assist the institutions in fulfilling their accountability to maintain a good relationship with Allah SWT (Hablun Min Allah) and human being (Hablun Min An Nas) which in turn to achieve the objectives of Shariah for sake of public interest (Afridi and Navaid, 2006).

The paper has several sections. Section 2 discusses a literature review relevant to the objective of this research. Section 3 highlights the research method while research findings are presented in Section 4. Section 5 explains conclusions, implications, and future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most government agencies including BZWI use fund accounting system. Fund accounting is an accounting system in which an entity's resources are divided among two or more accounting entities known as funds (Engku Ismail, 2019). Baitulmal, zakat and waqf funds are under purview of BZWI (Maliah et al., 2016). In Malaysia, the administration of Islamic affairs in each state and those funds is mentioned under Article 3 and Article 97 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution (1957) respectively. Regardless accounting system used by the entity, it usually involves recognition, measurement, and disclosure issues (AAOIFI, 2020; Baydoun and Willett, 2000; Khoramin, 2012). Recognition concerns the issue of whether elements of a financial statement such as funds (equities), assets, liabilities, revenues, and expenses to be recorded into an entity accounting system. Measurement is the amount that will be recorded on the financial statement elements (Abdul Rahim, 2010). Meanwhile, accounting disclosure which is the focus of this research is made on the face of financial statements, notes to the accounts, and through the relevant accounting policies, usually as the explanation related to those elements which are significantly influenced the entity's financial results (Bergmann, 2009). Such disclosure must be stated truthfully and fairly as they are important requirements in Islam for users of the information to make informed decisions (Hafiz and Maliah, 2020). Consistently, Allah SWT mentioned in the Holy Quran that:

“And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]” (QS Al-Baqarah 2:42).

This concept of disclosure has also been discussed under the Ethical perspective to accounting theory formulation. It implies that accounting disclosure has not been subject to undue influence, bias and misrepresentation (Belkaoui, 2012).

Islamic accounting literature frequently suggests two main principles of accounting disclosure, namely, full disclosure and social accountability. According to Lewis (2001), full disclosure is associated with the disclosure of relevant information by revealing all facts truthfully and fairly about the entity's activities. For instance, BZWI have to disclosure accounting information based on specific funds under their maintenance such as baitulmal, zakat, and waqf to achieve transparency. As Allah SWT mentioned in the Holy Quran that:

“He [Musa (Moses)] said, He says, It is a cow neither trained to till the soil nor water the fields, sound, having no other colour except bright yellow. They said, Now you have brought the truth. So they slaughtered it though they were near to not doing it” (QS Al-Baqarah 2:71).

Meanwhile, social accountability emphasizes on a man is only a trustee of what has been given by Allah SWT in the forms of goods, properties, and intangible assets. The success of a Muslim in this world and the hereafter depends on the extent to which he uses what has been entrusted to him. This means that every Muslim has a “hisab” or an “account” with Allah SWT in which he records all good and bad deeds throughout his life in this world. The “account” will continue until the day of death and Allah SWT will show to all their accounts on the judgment day. Allah SWT mentioned:

“How horrible will it be if a disaster strikes them because of what their hands have done, then they come to you swearing by Allah, We intended nothing but goodwill and reconciliation” (QS An-Nisa’ 4:62).

Therefore, the basic similarity between "hisab" in Islam and "account" lies in the accountability of every Muslim to discharge the duties as prescribed by Islamic teachings.

Abdul Rahim (2010) concludes that the above-mentioned two principles imply the need for accounts preparers to disclose all useful and important information for users to make decisions and judgments. Such disclosure is made because it is Allah SWT’s order to protect the interests of the society (Baydoun & Willet, 2000; Khoramin, 2012; Lewis, 2001). Although these principles have been discussed in prior Islamic accounting literature, this research suggests that it is imperative to conduct a study to further identify additional principles of such disclosure in the context of BZWI.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The interviewees of this research were fourteen accountants and officials in charge of the funds management from five BZWI that were assigned to the researchers by the Accountant’s General Department (AGD) of Malaysia. The officers were selected using convenience sampling since they are the main source of research data (Sekaran, 2003). Besides, three scholars who have vast experience in the areas of Islamic business, accounting, and finance were also consulted. This research utilized a semi-structured interview method to collect research data (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). This method has several advantages such as the researchers can prepare the questions in advance to guide the conversations, facilitates open-ended responses from interviewees for more in-depth research data, and allows two-way communication between research participants on the given topic (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

The research data was collected through several interview sessions in 2019. Each interview session was recorded by the researchers, with the permission of the interviewees. The recorded conversations were then transcribed into text for data analysis, data validation, and subsequent reference. Each interview session took around two hours to complete and was carried out on the agreed time and day. Three months were taken to complete the data collection process.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To achieve the research objective, the following question was posed to the interviewees during the interview sessions: “What are the accounting disclosure principles that appropriate for BZWI context?” The principles that were mentioned and explained by the interviewees can be seen in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Statement of shariah compliance

The first principle of accounting disclosure derived from the interview sessions is shariah compliance statement. In this context, BZWI together with their Shariah advisory council are required to make a brief statement on shariah compliance towards their operations and financial transactions. Shariah compliance means all operations and transactions of the institutions conform to Islamic rules and principles that derived from the Holy Quran, the practices of Prophet Muhammad Peace be Upon Him (PBUH) (Hadith), religious scholars (Ulama) and argument by analogy in legal and theological areas (Qiyas) (Napier, 2009; Susela, Hooper and Davey; 2006; Trokic, 2015; Uddin, 2015) and other relevant legal provisions. This finding is consistent with Dahlifah, Triyuwono, Mulawaran and Roekhudin (2018) as suggested that disclosure on shariah compliance among Islamic institutions is imperative to indicate a high level of financial reporting transparency. The transparency is a part of da'wah that has divine value for Islamic entities and Muslim community (Dahlifah et. al, 2018).

The example of Shariah Compliance Statement that can be applied by BZWI is shown below:

“We, members of the Shariah Advisory Council hereby confirm that in our best interests, the operation of the XYZ State Islamic Religious Council for the year ended 31 December 202X has been carried out in accordance with Shariah rules and principles”.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the shariah compliance is a vital statement of accounting disclosure for BZWI since it indicates that their operations and accounting practice are in accordance with Shariah rules and principles which in turn critical to preserve the interests of Islam and Muslim community at large.

4.2 Statement of institutional responsibilities towards Baitulmal, Zakat and Waqf

The second accounting disclosure principle emerged from the data analysis is the need of BZWI to make a statement on their responsibilities towards baitulmal, zakat and waqf funds. As mentioned earlier, managing these three funds are the main activities of BZWI and providing this statement in financial reporting practice is line with the various provisions as stipulated in the respective States Islamic Religious Administration Enactment or Ordinance.

Statement of responsibility towards baitulmal is to provide information about the main activities of the fund such as revenues generation and investments from this fund, development or construction of baitulmal buildings or properties, rental or leasing of baitulmal lands and so on. Example of such statement is shown below:

"Based on subsection X of the Islamic Religious Administration Enactment Year 202X, the XYZ State Islamic Religious Council has the role of developing the sources of Baitulmal (General Resources) in line with the Council's responsibility to develop the socio-economy of Muslims in State X according to Islamic law".

In terms of zakat, it is imperative for the institutions to mention about their responsibility towards zakat fund and their obligation in paying the zakat. The example of zakat responsibility statement is as follows:

"The XYZ State Islamic Religious Council is exempted from zakat based on compliance with Islamic law because it is the sole zakat muassasah entity (or established body) that has been given a mandate to administer zakat in State X. The subsidiary company must pay zakat when its business has met the legal requirements of zakat".

In addition, other aspects that need to be disclosed by BZWI relating to zakat are collection and distribution of zakat, zakat calculation methods, different types of zakat, zakat haul (period) and nisab value (amount), authorized zakat collection centers and so on. From this information, the stakeholders would be able to evaluate whether zakat fund is managed in an efficient and effective manner or not.

BZWI are also required to provide a statement on their responsibility towards waqf fund together with the fund activities such as rental generated from waqf buildings, leasing of waqf lands, development of waqf properties and any other relevant information. Such statement is critical to indicate the BZWI efforts in ensuring the fund continues to grow and act as the main agent for the socio-economic development of Muslim community. Example of waqf responsibility statement is:

"The XYZ State Islamic Religious Council is to manage the waqf resources in accordance with subsection X of the Islamic Religious Administration Enactment 202X that the Council shall be the sole trustee of all waqf to develop Islam and the benefits of Muslims in State X in accordance with Islamic law".

Taken overall, the above discussion indicates that this disclosure is necessary to emphasize the accountability of BZWI in discharging their duties related to those funds. It also enables users of BZWI financial information to know how the BZWI are doing and ensure that the institutions are acting in the interests of the Muslim community that they serve.

4.3 Statement of role of Shariah Advisory Council

The third accounting disclosure principle mentioned during the data collection process is statement of role of Shariah advisory councils of BZWI since their existence and guidance are very crucial to ensure the legitimacy of BZWI operations from the Islamic perspective.

As the reference body and advisor to BZWI on Shariah matters, the advisory council is responsible for validating BZWI operations, financial transactions and accounting practices to ensure their compatibility with the Shariah principles and rules. It is also vital to affirm that the advisory council comprised of qualified and competent individuals such as Shariah experts, market practitioners, regulators who have vast knowledge and experience in Islamic finance, economic, Shariah law and any other relevant areas of expertise (Muhammad, Rusni and Syed Musa, 2016). Therefore, important matters that could be disclosed in the statement include the main roles and functions, jurisdictions and profile of the members of the advisory council. Besides that, this statement can be disclosed together with the shariah compliance statement as mentioned earlier.

In short, from the above finding, it can be concluded that the disclosure of this statement is critical to demonstrate that the advisory councils reviewing the operations of their BZWI to ensure they comply with Shariah principles and rules. Thus, the credibility and integrity of the BZWI in managing Muslim community funds are maintained in the eyes of the various stakeholders.

4.4 Social accountability

The fourth essential accounting disclosure principle found in the study is social accountability. This finding is consistent with the prior Islamic accounting literature (Abdul Rahim, 2010; Baydoun & Willet, 2000; Khoramin, 2012; Lewis, 2001). This principle stresses on the ultimate accountability of every individual to Allah SWT. Muslims believe that all properties and resources in this world are belong to Allah SWT and human are only act as trustees. Allah SWT said in the Holy Quran that:

“O believers! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, nor betray your trusts knowingly” (QS Al-Anfaal 8:27).

Thus, accountability in Islam is much broader in its conception compared to the concept of accountability in conventional accounting that focuses on certain material benefits for the individual and the community to meet the economic rationalism philosophy of the capitalist system (Abdul Rahim, 2010; Baydoun & Willet, 2000; Khoramin, 2012; Lewis, 2001).

Muslims also believe that the well-being of life in the hereafter depends on their performance in this world (Abdul Rahim, 2010). This means that every human being has a "hisab" or "account" with Allah SWT in which he records all good and bad actions throughout his life in this world. The "account" will continue until the day of death and Allah SWT will show people their account on the Day of Judgment. Consistently, in the Holy Quran Allah SWT said:

“As such, Allah will reward every soul for what it has committed. Surely Allah is swift in reckoning” (QS Ibrahim 14:51).

From the above discussion, it can be understood that the basic similarity between "hisab" in Islam and "accounting" lies in the accountability of every Muslim to accomplish tasks entrusted upon him/her by taking into account the need of the Islamic teachings. In this context, BZWI are morally held accountable to Allah SWT for their actions including accounting practice since they will be shown on the Day of Judgment.

4.5 Full disclosure

The fifth principle reported in this study is full disclosure. This principle of accounting disclosure is frequently discussed in the Islamic accounting literature (Abdul Rahim, 2010; Baydoun & Willet, 2000; Khoramin, 2012; Lewis, 2001). This principle requires financial information providers to disclose relevant information that has attributes of truth, fairness, and accuracy to the users following the will of Allah SWT (Baydoun & Willett, 2000). For instance, BZWI have to disclose information regarding waqf, baitulmal and zakat funds since the various stakeholders have the right to know the effects of their operations on the well-being of the Muslim community and whether the operations comply with the Shariah (Lewis, 2001). Consistently, Allah SWT mentioned in the Holy Quran that:

“O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate from justice. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then know that Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do” (QS An-Nisa' 4:135).

The above discussion illustrates that full disclosure is the vital principle since the users require relevant and necessary information for understanding BZWI current financial performance in managing Muslim community funds. It is also necessary for predicting future obligations and assessing rewards and risks in their operation arrangements.

4.6 Decision usefulness

The sixth principle of accounting disclosure found in this research is decision usefulness. The primary purpose of financial reporting is to provide relevant and reliable information for main users to make rational organizational

decisions (Patton, 1992). The main users of financial information for the public sector as proposed by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB) are service recipients and their representatives, and resource providers and their representatives (IPSASB, 2014). This study takes a similar approach to IPSASB in the context of BZWI.

Therefore, the proposed main users of the BZWI financial information are service recipients, resources providers, and their representatives. Specifically, they consist of zakat payers and recipients, waqf contributors and recipients, baitulmal contributors and recipients, and recipients of other BZWI funds (for example, funds other than baitulmal, zakat, and waqf) and other contributors of BZWI funds (for example, state and federal governments) and their representatives. This suggestion is consistent with Baydoun and Willet (2000) who mentioned that Islamic financial institutions should provide and consider the information needed by stakeholders in the Muslim community to make decisions. Therefore, the Islamic accounting conceptual framework should be able to support that purpose (Baydoun and Willet 2000; Godfrey et al., 2010; Ku Nor Izah Ku Ismail et al., 2019). To test whether accounting disclosure achieves the purpose or not, the Decision-Theory approach could be utilized. If an institution's accounting system can provide relevant and reliable information for decision making, it is considered consistent with that Theory. For example, if providers and users of financial statements believe that current values are the most relevant and reliable to make decisions, such values should be applied in measuring and reporting current entity assets (Godfrey et al., 2010; International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), 2018).

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the principle of decision usefulness is a must for disclosing accounting information. This is because it can assist the users of BZWI information to make rational decisions for the betterment of the Muslim community in general.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to identify the principles of accounting disclosure from the perspective of BZWI. Interview sessions were conducted with fourteen officers from the institutions and three Islamic accounting scholars. The findings of the study indicated that six principles of accounting disclosure emerged from the data analysis. The principles are Statement of Shariah Compliance, Statement of Institutional Responsibilities towards Baitulmal, Zakat, and Waqf, Statement of Role of Shariah Advisory Council, Social Accountability, Full Disclosure, and Decision Usefulness. Among the six principles, Social Accountability and Full Disclosure are the frequently reported principles in Islamic accounting literature.

This research has implications in terms of theory and practice. Theoretically, this research contributes to Islamic accounting literature by providing information on the accounting disclosure principles that are in line with Shariah principles and rules. This in turn would facilitate more discussions and researches in the future. Practically, the information about the principles could guide BZWI in providing complete disclosure of funds under their purview since it is very important for users to make proper judgments and informed decisions. The findings of this study also provide valuable inputs for the AGD of Malaysia to develop a financial reporting conceptual framework that is applicable to BZWI.

The findings of this research are derived from the views of a few BZWI officers and Islamic accounting scholars. Thus, further research is needed to validate the current findings and identify additional accounting disclosure principles that are imperative for the institutions which are not reported in this study.

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Family Dynamic in the Construction of Malay Pengkids' Identity

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Abstract

The increasing phenomenon of Malay pengkids has been seen as an alarming situation in Malaysia. Family is the immediate social influence on a child's identity. Thus, the objective of this study was to explore how the family dynamic constructed the identity of Malay *pengkids* in Malaysia. This study employed a phenomenology framework. The inclusion criteria were Malay females that self-identified as *pengkid* and were aged from 18 to 60 years. By purposive and snowball sampling, fifteen participants were virtually interviewed with a semi-structured interview guide. The in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were entered into Atlas.ti 8 software and were coded accordingly using inductive and deductive approaches. Results revealed three themes of family dynamics that inclined Malay *pengkids*' identity, which were parental attitudes, perceptions of masculinity, and imprinting masculine character. Parental attitudes comprised bad-tempered and neglectful parents. Perceptions of masculinity described parents' preference for a boy, masculinity as a protector, and that a man is a terrible person. Imprinting masculine characteristics include being brought up as a boy and imitating male family members. In conclusion, the dynamic in a family environment plays a vital role in constructing Malay *pengkids*' identity.

Keywords: Family dynamic, Malay, *pengkid*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a multiracial country with Islam as the federal religion and Malay as the majority ethnicity (Federal Constitution 2010). Based on the federal constitution, Malay is defined as those who speak Malay, embrace Islam as the religion, and follow Malay customs (Federal Constitution 2010). Most Malays want to be known as Muslims first and foremost, as being Muslim provides a greater sense of belonging than being Malay (Teo 2015). This is consistent with how Malays are raised by their parents. Malays parents are firm and responsible, ensuring that their children comprehend and practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives, to achieve happiness both in the world and hereafter (Rusuli and Muhammad Daud 2019).

Malays must adopt Malays cultural and Islamic expectations of masculinity or femininity in the establishment of Malay Muslim gender identity (Hashim 2006). A Malay Muslim man is nurtured to be a husband that can protect and provide for his wife and children. A Malay Muslim woman is expected to fulfill her nature by being a wife and mother. Thus, Malay girls are introduced to the feminine role within the household as early as four years of age. The girls start to do feminine work at the age of seven or eight. They have also been taught to speak, move, and groom in a feminine manner so that they are prepared to be good wives (Omar 1994). Malay women are

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expected to conform to society's image of a sexually pure woman, in which sex only occurs after legal marriage between opposite sexes (Fazli Khalaf et al. 2018). On top of that, in Islamic teaching, same-sex sexual activities and imitating gender that is opposite from the sex born is prohibited as mentioned in Quran and hadith (Abdul Kadir et al. 2020).

However, despite the Malay cultural values and Islamic prohibition, there were increasing numbers of users on lesbian social media, which indicated that the number of lesbians in Malaysia is on an increasing trend (Juaini et al. 2017). In Malaysia, lesbians with masculine characteristics or butch are identified as *pengkids*, and their presence has also been increasingly worrisome to the public (Dzulkifli, Rokis, and Abdul Rahim 2018). Physically, a *pengkid* resembles a man by speaking with a husky voice, wearing masculine clothing, and hiding their breasts with a binder (Dzulkifli, Rokis, and Abdul Rahim 2018). In addition, *pengkids* are inclined to participate in dangerous behaviours such as reckless driving, smoking, clubbing, and substance abuse (Dzulkifli et al. 2018; Zhooryati and Intan 2014).

Being in a minority group that practises same-sex sexual behaviour and expresses in masculine, which is against the law, culture, and Islamic teaching, *pengkid* is at risk of having conflicts that may lead to mental illness such as depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts (Aziz et al. 2019; Jamal et al. 2019; Zhooryati and Intan 2014). For mental health professionals, in managing cases of Malay *pengkid* with mental illness, it is important to understand the contributing factors that are involved in the construction of Malay *pengkid*. Studies showed that unstable family, peer pressures, history of bad experience with man, loose in religiosity and social media inclined Malay women to socially constructed into lesbianism (Ahmad et al. 2015; Juaini and Azman 2021).

As the first socialisation agents for Malay girls, family is the most important influence on their sexual and gender identity. A cross-sectional survey by Ahmadian et al. (2014) found that poor family communication, structure, and discipline are associated with sexual risky behaviours in Malaysian rural female adolescents. Likewise, a longitudinal study among rural African American youths found that sexual risky behaviour can persist up to adulthood (Murry et al. 2013). Ahmad et al. (2014) also found that lesbian teens were less attached to their parents than heterosexual female teens.

In Northern Florida, Hiestand and Levitt (2005) interviewed 12 butchs to explore the development of butch identity. Butch modelled his masculinity after his fathers. In a family without fathers, daughters formed masculine characteristics to fill in the masculine role of fathers in the family. Apart from that, modern mothers were more independent and more aggressive compared to more traditional mothers, which portrayed some masculine traits. Yet, these masculine traits were admired and imitated by the daughters. Family acceptance further encouraged the butch identity development (Hiestand and Levitt 2005).

However, studies pertaining to family dynamics contributing to masculine characteristics among Malay *pengkids* are scarce. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how the family dynamic constructed the identity of Malay *pengkids* in Malaysia.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study applied a phenomenological approach to explore the essence of family dynamics in Malay *pengkids*' life experiences (Creswell and Poth 2018). To aid the recruitment of participants via purposive and snowballing sampling, key informants were identified to ensure transferability (Palinkas et al. 2015). Purposive sampling was done by inviting *pengkids* that attended care services. Some were referred by other service providers that researchers had shared information about the study with them. For snowball sampling, participants became the key informants who introduced other participants to the researcher. They shared the same inclusion criteria and provided more credibility compared to purposive sampling (Valerio et al. 2016). It worked better than purposive sampling because most of the *pengkids* trusted and got along well with the key informants.

A total of fifteen Malay female between the ages of 18 and 60 who identified as *pengkids* were included in the in-depth interviews. Those who could not comprehend in Malay or English, as well as those who were too unstable to be interviewed, were excluded.

As the data collection was done during the COVID-19 pandemic and Malaysia was under a movement control order (MCO), the communication with participants was done through email, WhatsApps, and video calls. The participants were informed about the procedure of the study and that the interviews were recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. A Google form incorporating informed consent and sociodemographic information of the

participants was used. The link to the Google form was sent to each of the participants. After getting informed consent and demographic questionnaires from the participants, each of them was interviewed for 50 to 90 minutes virtually using Cisco WebEx and a semi-structured interview guide. The use of an in-depth interview allowed for more probing, as well as a deeper explanation and more specifics of the participants' experiences (Creswell and Poth 2018). This study was carried out in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration and cleared by the Ethics Committee of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM/JEPeM/20070361).

2.1 Data management and analysis

All the recorded verbatims were transcribed by listening and relistening to allow the thoughts, feelings, and stories of the participants to filter through and to make sure that they were transcribed correctly. Then, the transcriptions were sent back to each participant for the member-checking process. Later, all the transcriptions were entered into Atlas.ti 8 software for analysis. The data was read and reread line by line for the coding inductively and deductively. Inductively, new codes emerged during the analysis, while deductively, the predetermined codes were built from the literature reviews and research questions. The codes were grouped to develop the subthemes. Then, the subthemes were grouped into themes.

2.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the research (Lincoln and Guba 1985). All the interview sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analysed cautiously to ensure their credibility. In addition, the participants agreed with member-checking process, as part of ensuring the trustworthiness of this study (Birt et al. 2016). The audit trail of data collection, participants' information, and reflective journal were kept, ensuring the dependability (Creswell and Poth 2018). The confirmability was ensured by continued discussion among researchers.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Sociodemographic data

The mean age of the participants was 38, ranging from 26 to 56 years old. All the participants were single, except one, who was married with one son. Most of the participants were from the western coast of Peninsular Malaysia (n = 9, 60%) and received up to tertiary education (n = 10, 67%). The mean monthly income of the participants was RM2880 per month.

Table 1: Sociodemographic data of participants (n=15)

ID	Age	Occupation	State	Monthly Income (RM)	Marital Status	Education
S01	40	Self-employed Information	Selangor Kuala	1000	Single	Tertiary
S02	39	Technologist	Lumpur	10000	Single	Tertiary
S03	42	Self-employed	Selangor	1400	Single	Tertiary
S04	34	Government Servant	Penang	4000	Married	Tertiary
S05	41	Self-employed	Johor Kuala	3500	Single	Secondary
S06	38	Food & Beverage	Lumpur	2700	Single	Secondary
S07	43	Programmer	Selangor	3500	Single	Tertiary
S08	26	Clerk	Melaka Kuala	2000	Single	Secondary
S09	45	Writer	Lumpur.	4000	Single	Tertiary
S10	33	Customer service	Selangor	2000	Single	Tertiary
S11	34	Self-employed	Kedah.	1000	Single	Secondary
S12	35	Chef	Selangor	3500	Single	Tertiary
S13	56	Receptionist	Melaka	1300	Single	Secondary
S14	39	Self-employed	Kelantan	1000	Single	Tertiary
S15	30	Chef Assistant	Selangor	2300	Single	Tertiary

Data from the in-depth interviews (IDI) discovered three themes, which are parental attitudes, perceptions of masculinity, and imprinting masculine character. All the data was translated to English from the Malay language.

3.2 Parental attitude

There are two subthemes under the parental attitude, which are bad-tempered parent and neglectful parent.

i) Bad-tempered parent

Some of the participants had bad-tempered parents who were always angry toward them and even hurt them physically. For example, S06 claimed that she was beaten by her father for doing things that her father disliked.

"I was always beaten by my father for no reason. He would scatter the clothes that I didn't have time to fold in front of the house. He scolded me and my siblings, even in front of the neighbours. I don't remember anything good about him."

Beside father, there were also mothers who struck their children. For instance, S09, a writer, stated that her mother was the dominant parent and would physically and verbally abuse her. Later, she realised that her mother behaved that way because of her mother's bad history and had mental health problems.

"My mother was scary with her loud voice and fast hand. She kept and hung an orange-colored rubber pipe against the wall for thrashing."

ii) Neglectful parent

Several participants claimed that their parents did not really care about them. Their parents were too busy with work or were so abusive that participants did not receive adequate attention, fondness, and teachings from their parents. For example, S10 shared her experience

"My father didn't care much about his children; he was busy looking for money. He was always never at home."

Because of being neglected by their parents, participants were unable to learn or model the appropriate gender identity or role according to their biological sex. They did not know what the appropriate behaviour for a Malay girl was, especially in some family with dominant mothers and lacking in expressing femininity. On top of that, the parents did not care if the daughter expressed herself as a male. Some parents even affirmed and even encouraged the daughter to behave like that. S12, a chef, shared that her family has no problem with her appearances.

"They didn't bother to argue about what clothes I should wear."

Thus, the lack of affection towards daughters pushed the daughters to find affection with their female friends. The affection, care, and understanding that they received from their female friends slowly developed into a sexual attraction towards the same sex and ended up with sexual activities.

Nonetheless, some parents were careless in practicing Islamic teaching, such as praying, which reflected to the children that Islamic teaching is not important enough to be practiced. For instance, S06 shared her concern.

"I did not even see my father praying...They did not pray, probably because they did not have a proper education. My grandmother, my late grandfather, didn't pray either."

Thus, they still expressed themselves in masculine characteristics and practised sexual activities with women though the Islamic teaching and laws prohibit them.

3.3 Perceptions of masculinity

Under perceptions of masculinity, three subthemes emerged, which are parents' preference for a boy, masculine as a protector, and man is a terrible person.

i) Parents' preference for a son

Some participants believed that their parents favoured their brothers compared to them. The brothers had more privileges compared to them, so they wanted to be a man and expressed themselves in a masculine way. By doing

that, they believed that they could get their parents' attention just like their brother. S12, a chef mentioned that she preferred to be like a man as her father always blamed and punished her instead of her brothers.

"Dad always prefers sons, and only they were right. I rebelled. If you were a male, you wouldn't get beaten. That's why I think it's not fair."

Unconsciously, differences in affection between a son and a daughter might lead to feelings of low self-esteem, unwanted, and anger in the daughter. Thus, they looked for other attention outside the family that could accept them as they are.

ii) Masculine as a protector

In addition, a few of the participants had a history of being sexually molested by their own close family members. Subsequently, they believed that it was unsafe to express themselves as female, as females are always the victims. Thus, they believed that it was better for them to express themselves as men, as a man is stronger. S15 shared her thoughts on this issue.

"From my childhood experience, even my own flesh and blood, let alone other people, can make me like that...When I dress like a man, I feel safe from men."

Apart from that, some participants expressed themselves in masculine characters because they played the role as the family breadwinner and protector. For example, S06, as the eldest daughter, she needs to take care of her mother and younger siblings.

"I work hard. I will give the money to my mom." (S06)

iii) Man is a terrible person

Some of the *pengkids* had the experience of being abused sexually, physically, or mentally by their immediate family members, such as brothers or uncles. Because of this experience, *pengkids* developed a belief that men are horrible people, and they hate them. For instance, S15 expressed her hatred.

"You are my brother. You should protect me as your sister. But you made me like that. Why?"

As for S06, almost all her immediate male family members were irresponsible. Her father was abusive towards her mother and all of her siblings. She observed how her father treated her mother until her mother asked for a divorce. Her elder brother sexually molested her and her younger sisters. Not enough, she also claimed that her brothers-in-law were also irresponsible. All these bad experiences created the perception that all men are bad and she hates men.

"I saw the cruelty of men. I see what kind of lust they had. It doesn't matter if you're a sister or a friend. The way he handled me; I didn't see any good in front of my eyes."

As a result, *pengkids* did not have affection for men, and they developed a sexual attraction towards women instead of men.

3.4 Imprinting masculine character

Two subthemes identify under imprinting masculine characters, which are being brought up as a boy and imitating male family members.

i) Brought up as a boy

Most *pengkids* started to develop masculine characteristics since childhood because of the way they were brought up as boys by their parents, who installed the masculine characteristics in them. Some *pengkids* shared that they were raised like boys because their parents preferred to have a son rather than a daughter. They dressed the daughters in boys' clothes, played with boys' toys, and did more male activities as shared by S01.

“They wanted a son, so they treated me like a son...They always asked me to climb, did things that boys always did.”

ii) Imitating family members

Apart from that, some of the participants had been imitating their fathers, brothers, or male cousins who were always spending time with them, as shared by S02, an information technologist.

“I have two younger brothers. Growing up, I was very close to them.”

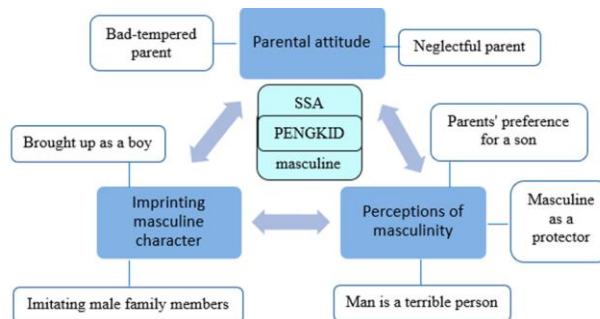
As was mentioned by S09, a freelance writer, and S14, a self-employed business owner, being surrounded by male family members further reinforces masculine characteristics in them. This is particularly the case in families in which there is only one daughter.

“Actually, I am the only daughter; the others are all sons. My relationship with my father is close. As a result, my style is more masculine.”

“My siblings are all male. I was always with my brothers.”

Apart from that, *pengkids* also imitated their parents’ behaviour, as revealed by S03

“I stole my parents’ cigarettes. I tried (without my parents’ knowledge). I felt like trying because I watched them smoking. My mom also smoked.”



*SSA: same-sex attraction

Fig. 1: The construction of Malay *pengkid*'s identity

4. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the construction of Malay *pengkids*' identity consists of two important elements, which are sexual orientation toward female or lesbianism and gender identity expression as masculine. Sexual attraction to females stems from the perception that males are bad, terrible, and untrustworthy, which leads Malay females to prefer sexual desire with a female over a male. The affection, care, and understanding that Malay females got from their female peers further strengthened the desire.

The gender identity expression of masculine characteristics in Malay *pengkids* evolved from a lack of a proper role model of femininity in the family, the perception that sons were better than daughters, being brought up as boys by parents, and modelling masculine characteristics from male family members.

Parental attitudes are the most important social effects that a daughter has during the early years of life. These attitudes, along with the frustrations they cause, the ways they can be controlled, and the trouble they can cause, can have a big effect on a daughter's behavior, especially when she is still small. Similarly, previous studies revealed lack of parental care and inconsistent parenting during childhood were associated with risky sexual activities in female adolescents (Ahmadian et al. 2014; Murry et al. 2013).

Neglectful parents are found to play a role in Malay *pengkids*' identity, which is consistent with a study among six Malay lesbians, ranging from 18 to 25 years old, by Ahmad et al. (2015). Their parents neglected them in that they were always argumentative, busy with work, and had a big family (Ahmad et al. 2015). In western studies, sexual-and-gender minority women (SGMW) also mentioned feelings of being abandoned, disregarded, and

unloved (Apostolou 2020). Daughters of neglectful parents tend to grow up with negative or vague feelings towards their parents as they perceive that their parents abandoned them. They would seek maternal affection from other women in a lesbian relationship (Apostolou 2020).

On top of that, parents' attitudes that accepted the masculine characteristics in their daughters further reinforced the identity of Malay *pengkid*. This is comparable to what Juaini and Azman (2021) discovered when they interviewed 12 lesbians, in which their families were supportive of their relationship with other women.

Apart from that, neglectful parents failed to educate or portray a good example of gender expression to their children, as in the cultural values of Malay and Islamic teaching that prohibit females from imitating males and vice versa. It is important for children that parents enforce the right gender expression for their children and educate them about having sexual intimacy only after a legal marriage with a man. The significance of lowering the gaze and closing their aurat accordingly, even with same-sex, must be emphasised by parents to avoid sexual intimacy (Ashraah et al. 2013).

Expressions of gender identity are constructed through the discreet, conscious, and unconscious relations between parents and children. The relationship may be influenced by how the parents feel about the biological sex of their child. For example, parents that preferred a son compared to a girl tended to dress up, treat, and play with their daughters in masculine ways. Apart from that, the preference for a boy made daughters feel undervalued, unimportant, and unnoticed (Sivak and Smirnov 2019).

A history of witnessing domestic violence, parental conflict, and being raped or molested by a male family member resulted in a dysfunctional cognitive schema, or core belief that all men are bad or terrible. Slowly, a hatred for men and an affection for women consolidated. This affectionate ended up with lesbianism, which showed similar findings to a study among lesbians (Juaini and Azman 2021). Likewise, Aziz et al. (2019) found that *pengkids'* generalisation that all men were horrible was imprinted by a mother's comment that a guy was terrible by pointing to her father. These unpleasant experiences may lead to anticipation of unfavourable outcomes associated to the child's behaviours.

Similarly, Western studies also reported that parental physical abuse and childhood maltreatment were higher among non-heterosexual adolescents compared to heterosexual adolescents (Friedman et al. 2011; Charak et al. 2019). Childhood adverse events, such as trauma, were reported more among lesbians with masculine characteristics compared to feminine (Wright 2018; Lehavot, Molina, and Simoni 2012). Apart from that, childhood adverse events predispose to mental illness in later life, such as depression and suicidality (Creighton et al. 2019; Kuzminskaite et al. 2021; Charak et al. 2019).

On top of that, imitating male family members' characters is similar to Hiestand and Levitt (2005)'s findings. Likewise, in a family without a father, daughters fill in the masculine role as protectors in the family (Hiestand and Levitt 2005). The acceptance or ignorance of other family members, especially mother further strengthens the *pengkids'* identity (Hiestand and Levitt 2005). Thus, proper guidance from family members is important in imprinting the appropriate gender expression in daughters. A mother role is important to model femininity in daughters, as in traditional Malay women (Hashim 2006). Yet, the trend in this millennium is the gender role of women not only in taking care of the family but also in their career, whether in education, financial, business, or others. So, it's important for a child's development that they grow up in a good family where both parents do their jobs well and are always tolerant.

4.1 Implication

This study showed that parents need to be educated on parenting skills. Parenting education need to be emphasized in the premarital course, especially sexual education. As the immediate and closest people for a child to imitate, parents need to impose the child's sexual and gender identity appropriately. At the same time, parents need to spend quality time with the child, validate the child's emotion and build a strong relationship with the child.

Parents can strengthen the spiritual and bonding time with the family by praying together (Franceschelli and O'Brien 2014). Father, as the leader in the family, can lead the prayers and spend time together after praying, talking about religion or sharing sessions among family members. Before ending the session, take the chance to hug all the family members as hugging can improve emotional well-being and self-esteem and impart a feeling of security to a child (Forsell and Åström 2012).

As Malay embrace Islam as way of life, parents need to provide sex education according to Islam, which emphasised children to ask permission if they wanted to enter parents' bedroom as mentioned in al Quran "And when the children among you reach puberty, let them ask permission (at all times) as those before them have done. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses; and Allah is Knowing and Wise"24:59). Islam also teaches parents to separate the place for sleep between girls and boys.

Parents also need to educate their child, especially adolescents, about psychosexual development and health, including safe and unsafe touch, to avoid being molested. A child needs to be trained to be assertive, to be able to say no and to know how and when to scream for help or run away if somebody tries to do something bad to them. Additionally, parents need to guide their children on what is allowed and what is prohibited in sexual intimacy

For mental health professionals, it important to take further childhood history, especially in Malay *pengkids* with mental health illness. The dysfunctional thought should be address properly and accordingly. The childhood unresolved conflicts need to be address, probably in psychodynamic therapy. A holistic approach that incorporate psychospirituality need to be deliver to patient.

4.2 Future research

Studies on the lived experiences or the impact of self-identifying as *pengkids* among Malay female need to be carried out to be able to help them. Subsequently, studies on the interventions that incorporate the Malay cultural and Islamic spiritual values are need to help Malay *pengkids* to deal with the impact.

5. CONCLUSION

Family dynamics influence the construction of Malay *pengkids*' identity actively and passively via parental attitudes, perceptions of masculinity, and imprinted masculine character.

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The Prospect of Legalising Smart Arbitral Award in Malaysia: An Analytical Overview

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Abstract

The role of smart contract and blockchain is growing at astonishing speed globally and especially in the law world, owing to their valuable advantages. However, the Malaysian arbitration industry is still employing the traditional approach in practice. Specifically, the term smart arbitral award remains mysterious because the arbitral award in Malaysia is still based on the traditional approach. This means that the arbitration award should be made “in-writing” and contained the signatures of the arbitral members. This article examines the prospect of legalising smart arbitral award in Malaysia using doctrinal legal research. Primary and secondary data are used and collected through a library-based approach. Concerning the data analysis, both types of data are analysed using analytical and critical approaches. As a result, it is discovered that blockchain technology has eliminated the third party while maintaining a secure, immutable, irreversible, and authentic network, whereas smart contract has introduced an automatable and self-executable computer protocol. Furthermore, the smart arbitral award might be valid and legitimate in Malaysia. For more legal certainty, it is suggested that Malaysian lawmakers have to reform section 33 (1) of the Arbitration Act 2005 (Act 646).

Keywords: Blockchain, dispute resolution, smart contract, traditional arbitration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Decentralised technology has gradually become an essential element of the lives of people. It has gained popularity among consumers and businesses in almost every sector due to its immersive benefits and distinctive qualities (Tochen, 2019). Blockchain represents a core and vital element of this technology and the pillar that all other technologies rely upon. It allows technology, such as the smart contract, to operate as designed and achieve the intended objectives of this technology (Christidis & Devetsikiotis, 2016).

Blockchain established for the first time a “peer-to-peer” (P2P) network that can facilitate, process, and store electronic transactions of value without the need for a third (3rd) party while maintaining the trust in the network (Zheng et al., 2017). Numerous scientists and computer experts have contributed to the creation of the current blockchain, and each of them has contributed to a specific aspect of this technology’s functionality.

Bitcoin was the first operational blockchain introduced by Satoshi Nakamoto. It comprises a record stored as data-storing blocks and chains connecting them (Abd Aziz et al., 2022). This technology is supported by cryptography and hashing functions. Each block includes transaction data, a timestamp, the block’s hash, and the hash of the block that preceded it (Swan, 2015). The European Parliament defined blockchain as “a mechanism that uses an encryption technique known as cryptography and a set of specific mathematical algorithms to create and verify a continuously growing data structure to which data can only be added and from which existing data cannot be removed, taking the form of a chain of transaction blocks that functions as a distributed ledger” (Houben & Snyers, 2022).

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Beyond serving as a network for exchanging cryptocurrencies, blockchain has evolved to serve various purposes over time to work with other technologies (Zhu, 2021). It can be utilised for validation, tracking, registries, supply chain management, and any other task requiring secure and unchangeable data storage and/or digital transactions. However, the smart contract is one of the blockchain technology. It is an automated digital protocol that self-executes the conditional statements coded by the parties (Szabo, 1994). This innovative technology did not see the light until the emergence of blockchain, which provides a safe and suitable platform where the smart contract can operate in a secure, immutable and decentralised way (Vacca et al., 2021). The real revival of the smart contract came after the introduction of blockchain 2.0 by Ethereum Blockchain (Nzuva, 2019).

In the context of this article, the interest in using the smart contract in Malaysia is increasing (Zain et al., 2019) due to its valuable advantages, specifically in the arbitration industry (Labanieh, Hussain & Mahdzir, 2021). For instance, the smart contract is decentralised, self-executable, immutable, secure and highly useable (Papantoniou, 2020). However, the Malaysian arbitration industry is still employing the traditional approach in practice. Specifically, the term of the smart arbitral award remains mysterious. This is because the arbitral award in Malaysia is still based on the traditional approach. This, in turn, means that the arbitration award should be made “in-writing” and contained the signatures of the arbitral members.

Therefore, it is the right time to introduce the term smart arbitral award to the arbitration industry in Malaysia and examine its validity according to Arbitration Act 2005 (Act 646) (henceforward as “AA-646”). The rationale behind this is driven by the need to revolutionise the practice of arbitration in Malaysia and align it with Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR.4.0). This would play a vital role in enhancing and strengthening the position of the Malaysian arbitration industry.

2. BLOCKCHAIN AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF SMART CONTRACT

Blockchain is a growing ledger composed of blocks connected using cryptography and hashing functions (Sarmah, 2018). Both of them guarantee the ledger’s security, immutability, and authenticity. Again, all blocks in a blockchain are linked sequentially, leaving no room for manipulation (Zheng et al., 2018). Furthermore, each block enjoys a hashing value that serves as a signature for the block generated by hashing all the data or transactions contained within the block, the timestamp, and the hash of the previous block (Yaga et al., 2018).

Moreover, each block stores data and hashes them to produce the block’s hash value. This hash value is used as the block’s digital fingerprint (Riadi et al., 2021). Consensus mechanisms also ensure the integrity and dependability of a network through the efforts of nodes, which are system participants. Various blockchains employ distinct consensus mechanisms (Pilkington, 2016). The objective is to ensure that the transaction is valid, processed, and permanently added to the blockchain.

Additionally, it is worth noting that every user on the blockchain owns a public key and a private key (Ahram et al., 2017). Anyone can access the public key, while the private key is a secret code that should only be known by its owner (Golosova & Romanovs, 2018). The payee and the payer have a “public and a private key”. The payee encodes the transaction information into the public key of the payor and then sends the document to the payor, who would be capable to access it using his or her private key. After the parties have completed the transaction, the transaction goes to the unconfirmed transaction pool, where nodes take this transaction, validate it, process and store it. This demonstrates the role of nodes in facilitating such transaction and ensuring its validity and security.

3. SMART CONTRACT

The smart contract is not a new idea. It dates back to the '90s when Nick Szabo, a computer scientist, coined the term “smart contract” to emphasise the goal of incorporating what he calls “highly evolved” contract law and related business practices into the design of internet-based electronic commerce protocols (Laubscher & Khan, 2020). In one of his early papers, Szabo defines a smart contract as “a set of promises specified in digital form, along with the protocols within which the parties perform on these promises” (Szabo, 1994). In another publication, Szabo defines the smart contract as a “digital, computable contract in which the performance and enforcement of contractual terms occur automatically, without human intervention.” To simplify the complexity behind a smart contract, Szabo compared the concept of a smart contract to a soft drink vending machine, stating that when the money is paid, an irreversible sequence of actions is initiated. Specifically, the cash is retained and a beverage is provided. This is because the transaction cannot be halted during its progress, the money cannot be refunded once the beverage has been provided, and the transaction terms are embedded in the machine’s hardware

and operating system software. Currently, a smart contract as flight insurance could also be used to de-execute/execute terms and conditions (clauses) that rely on a particular behavior; for example, if the data show the cancellation or any delay in the flight, the passenger will be refunded automatically.

It is important to note that the smart contract differs from the traditional contract as it is computer-generated that composed of programming language. It is also a computer protocol that automatically executes the embedded terms and conditions coded by the parties (Giancaspro, 2017). So, there is no need for a third (3rd) party to interfere in order to enforce it (Raskin, 2017) since it is based on the “If-Than” approach (Sillaber & Waltl, 2017). On the other hand of the spectrum, the traditional contract, such as the arbitral award, is written in the native and understandable language (human language) (Mik, 2017), and it needs a third (3rd) party to enforce it. For instance, the Malaysian High Court is responsible for recognising and enforcing the arbitral award.

Furthermore, a smart contract passes through several stages that demonstrate its uniqueness. These stages start from negotiating the “terms and conditions” agreed upon between the parties and coding the smart contract until the final execution of it (smart contract). Figure 1. provides a simple illustration of the working mechanism of the smart contract.

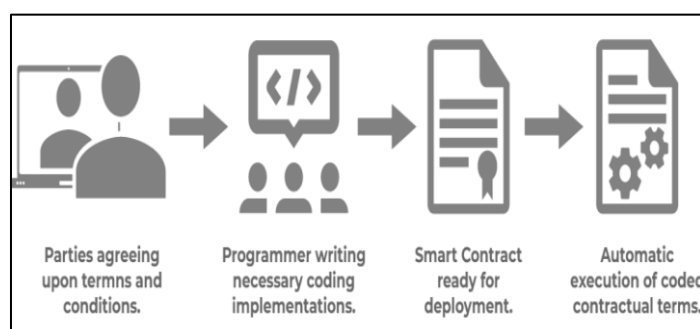


Fig. 1. Simple Illustration of the Working Mechanism of the Smart Contract (Lareo, 2022).

Currently, smart Contract is executed on a platform that relies on distributed ledger technology (DLT) or blockchain. This ensures a smart contract’s safe and secure use (Khan et al., 2021). Moreover, there are many blockchains with different characteristics and purposes. Each blockchain has its own method for developing a smart contract and interacting programmatically with the network. After providing a comprehensive and detailed explanation of a smart contract and blockchain technologies, it is important to examine to what extent the AA-646 is sufficient to validate and recognise the smart arbitral award.

4. THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE SMART ARBITRAL AWARD ACCORDING TO THE AA- 646

First and foremost, the lawmakers in Malaysia have defined a traditional arbitral award as “a decision of the arbitral tribunal on the substance of the dispute and includes any final, interim or partial award and any award on costs or interest but does not include interlocutory orders” (section 2 of AA-646). Section 33 (1) of the AA-646 determines exactly the legal requirements for a valid traditional arbitral award. It mentioned that the traditional arbitral award should be made “in-writing” (paper form) and contained the traditional “hand-written” signatures of the arbitral members. Additionally, section 33 (2) of the same act indicates that if the arbitral tribunal contains more than one (1) arbitrator, the traditional arbitral award should include the majority of signatures of the arbitral members along with the reason behind any omitted signatures (the arbitrators that refused to sign the traditional arbitral award).

In the context of this article, it is vital to indicate that the term smart arbitral award differs from the term traditional arbitral award. Specifically, the smart arbitral award comes in a coded form (programming language), and it carries the digital or electronic signatures of the arbitrators, unlike the traditional arbitral award that comes in a paper form and contains the traditional “hand-written” signatures of the arbitrator. Consequently, there is a need to examine two (2) issues. Firstly, whether the arbitral award, which comes in a coded form (programming language), fulfils the requirement of “in writing” according to the AA-646. Secondly, whether the smart arbitral award, which carries the digital or electronic signatures of the arbitrators, fulfils the requirement of a “hand-written” signature according to the AA-646.

In order to examine the first issue, it is necessary to analyse other prevailing laws in Malaysia, such as Electronic Commerce Act 2006 (Act 658) (henceforward as “ECA-658”). Under section 5 of the ECA-658, the electronic message is defined as “an information generated, sent, received or stored by electronic means”. Furthermore, section 7 of the ECA-658 elucidates how the requirement of “in-writing” can be satisfied. It provides that;

“Where any law requires information to be in writing, the requirement of the law is fulfilled if the information is contained in an electronic message that is accessible and intelligible so as to be usable for subsequent reference.”

In the light of the foregoing, it could be said that a smart arbitral award might be legitimate according to the AA-646 if it meets specific requirements stipulated in section 7 of the ECA-658. This materialises if the smart arbitral award’s content is accessible for the following/subsequent reference (if necessary). Therefore, since the smart arbitral award would be reserved and recorded in a blockchain platform that is immutable, secure, unchangeable, and accessible for the following/subsequent reference (if necessary), it would be legally admissible and valid according to the AA-646.

Concerning the second issue, as mentioned earlier, the AA-646 still requires that the traditional arbitral award should include the traditional “hand-written” signatures of the arbitrators. However, a smart arbitral award, which is signed digitally or electronically, could be valid in Malaysia because, since 1997, Malaysia has acknowledged a digital signature through the enactment of the Digital Signature Act 1997 (Act 562) (henceforward as “DSA-562”). Section 2 (1) of the DSA-562 defines a digital signature as;

“A transformation of a message using an asymmetric cryptosystem such that a person having the initial message and the signer’s public key can accurately determine (a) whether the transformation was created using the private key that corresponds to the signer’s public key; and (b) whether the message has been altered since the transformation was made.”

Side by side, section 62 (1) of the DSA-562 determines the legal criteria for a valid digital signature. It also gives any “document signed with a digital signature the same binding power as the document signed with a hand-written signature, an affixed thumbprint, or any other mark” (section 62 (2) (a) of the DSA-562). Further, the DSA-562 does not ignore the legality “of any symbol from being legitimate as a signature under any other Malaysian applicable law” (section 62 (2) (a) of the DSA-562). This leads that the DSA-562 would not disregard the legitimacy of electronic signature (e-signature) under the ECA-658.

The level of legal development does not stop at that stage because Malaysia has also recognised the concept of e-signature by enacting the ECA-658, which regulates the e-signature. According to Part 1 (5) of the ECA-658, e-signature means;

“Any letter, character, number, sound or any other symbol or any combination thereof created in an electronic form adopted by a person as a signature.”

In the light of the previous, it is obvious that the ECA-658 demonstrates that an e-signature should have the same legal power as a hand-written signature, provided that some requirements are fulfilled (sections 9(1) & (2) of the ECA-658). For example, an e-signature must sufficiently determine the signer and demonstrate her /his acceptance on the data and information to which this signature associates.

Based on the previous facts, it seems that from a logical and legal perspective, there is no obstacle affecting the legitimacy of the smart arbitral award that is electronically or digitally signed by the arbitrators, especially when the e-signature or the digital signature satisfies the requirements mentioned in section 9 of the ECA-658 and section 62 (1) of the DSA-562, respectively.

Nonetheless, for more legal certainty and sustainability, the Malaysian lawmakers have to think out of the box and reform section 33 (1) of the AA-646 in a way that clearly recognises the smart arbitral award comes in a coded form (programming language), and it carries the digital or electronic signatures of the arbitrators. This can be accomplished once they re-define the arbitration award in the AA-646.

5. CONCLUSION

The role of disruptive technologies, such as a smart contract and blockchain, is growing at astonishing speed globally and especially in the law world, owing to their valuable advantages in enhancing the performance and efficacy of several industries, including the arbitration industry. Specifically, it is discovered that blockchain technology has eliminated the third party while maintaining a secure, immutable, irreversible, and authentic network, whereas smart contracts have introduced an automatable and self-executable computer protocol for the first time.

Furthermore, the term smart arbitral award remains mysterious in Malaysia. This is because the arbitral award is still based on the traditional approach. This, in turn, means that the arbitral award should be made “in-writing” and contained the signatures of the arbitral members. However, it is clear that there is no legal obstacle affecting the legitimacy of the smart arbitral award according to the AA-646. In short, it might be valid and legitimate in Malaysia due to the enactment of the ECA-658 and the DSA-562. Nonetheless, for more legal certainty and sustainability, the Malaysian lawmakers have to think out of the box and amend section 33 (1) of the AA-646 in a way that clearly recognises the smart arbitral award comes in a coded form (programming language), and it carries the digital signatures or e-signatures of the arbitrators. This can be accomplished once they re-define the arbitral award in the AA-646.

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Higher Education at the Crossroads of Disruption: Phenomenological Insights into Malaysian Experience

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Abstract

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic has abruptly changed many facets of the global civilization, upending everything in its path. Everything has been affected, not only the education industry, which has witnessed some unexpected shifts in many different corners of the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Malaysian Higher Education initiated the use of online learning or e-learning with technology and devices as a communication mediator to replace face-to-face learning. The abrupt transition from face-to-face to online learning has brought many challenges to instructors and students. Thus, this study is aimed to describe the lecturers' experience and perspectives in dealing and addressing the various challenges with the sudden educational shift triggered by the pandemic in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. A phenomenological approach was employed through adoption of semi-structured in-depth interview via Microsoft Teams with two respondents. The findings from the interview were transcribed, coded, and analysed thematically according to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis framework. It is found that although lecturers do aware of the implementation of online education, they are not necessarily ready and prepared to face the real situation when changes happen drastically. Further study is needed to answer the question arisen for better understanding.

Keywords: COVID-19, disrupted settings, Higher Education, lecturers' perspectives, Malaysian experience

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past three years, we have been bombarded with news about the deadly virus known as Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Vergnaud, 2020). Due to the pandemic, there is no exception to every country in the world, including Malaysia. In term of the national security, the safest ways are issuing Movement Control Orders (MCOs) at multiple phases. As a result, various sectors are affected by these drastic changes, including the higher education sector, involving both public and private universities, community colleges, and polytechnics that has affected a number of "1.2 million in higher education institutions, including some 130,000 international students" (cited in Kamil & Sani, 2021, p. 113). This results a transition in the educational landscape in a very short period of time, involving the shift from face-to-face interaction to content sharing through online media and "open education practices" (Burgos 2020; Huang et al. 2020; Intelligent Learning Institute 2020). Kamil and Sani (2021) also add that while online learning having advantages in term of lowering costs, time and environment flexibility, there are still few barriers and challenges that need to be addressed that impacts in the style of teaching and learning process that will be carried out (Luthra & Mackenzie, 2020) by proactively using the technology in the lesson preparation, including projects, group work, presentations, and assessment. Thus, this study is aimed to describe the lecturers' experience and perspectives in dealing and addressing the various challenges with the sudden educational shift triggered by the pandemic, which involving (i) lecturers' readiness and preparedness, (ii) the academic burden that was faced by the lecturers, and (iii) pedagogical approach that were used by the lecturers.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As a consequence of the pandemic, the teaching and learning process is pedagogically shifted from conventional methods to a more flexible approach (Mishra et al., 2020). Traditional education approaches are decreasing and being replaced by the new era educational approaches such as "distant learning, mobile learning, personalized learning, flipped and blended learning, social collaborative learning, and game-based learning" (cited in Demir, 2021, p. 1). However, these drastic changes indirectly interfere with the development of the education system and has an impact on "education and training approaches, methods, practices, and tools" (Kabir, Islam, & Deena, 2020; Demir, 2021). Nevertheless, DeCapua (2016) and Custodio and O'Loughlin (2017) also mentioned that disruptive educational settings should be adapted because they are considered "assets for progress, performance improvement (cited in Affouneh & Burgos, 2020, p. 13). In addition, with the help of high internet speed and cloud computing technologies, it allows the collection of information and communication to run smoothly and create a more interactive and independent educational potential (Demir, 2021). Although online learning is seen as part of the "new normal", some may agree that online learning is less effective due to the lack of human touch, which prevents lecturers from forming engaging and meaningful relationships with their students (Chung, et al., 2020).

On top of that, it is also undeniable that lecturers need to find a way to create an ideal formula that can prepare students to face challenges that may hinder their learning process (Moran, 2020). Regardless of that fact, the well-being of lecturers was at time overlooked in order to prioritise the well-being of students to ensure that their academic performance is not affected (Brewster, et al., 2021). Brewster et al. (2021) also added that the increment in workload and productivity demands brought by the rise of technology used at the higher education level is closely related to increased work-related stress, burnout, and mental health difficulties. Besides, lecturers are also faced with problems related to sudden shift from traditional learning to online learning. Apart from trying to adapt to the new normal of education, lecturers too need to deal with issues related to students' shortcomings like social inequity and digital divide which prevented them from participating in online classes due to lack of stable Internet connection and devices, low family income and inconducive learning environment at home (Kaur & Bhatt, 2020; Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Furthermore, another prevalent challenge that higher education instructors need to face is academic dishonesty that often occurs among students (Ferguson et al., 2022), which includes "cheating in exams and academic assignments, committing plagiarism, and falsifying information or citations" (cited in Sediq et al., 2021, p. 3840). Burgason et al., (2019) stated that some of the ways students committed academic dishonesty during online exams is by opening and hiding browser windows as a means of searching for answers on the internet, accessing images and text from cellphones or smart watches. Online truancy also became a rampant problem as students not only have the tendency to skip online classes but also failed to complete any asynchronous learning tasks given to them (Mahyoob, 2020). Academic misconduct is caused by several factors like "knowledge gap" in which some students experienced difficulties in accessing information related to their studies, lack of policy and rules and regulations related to academic misconduct during remote learning and lack of assistance in supporting students' different learning styles (Gamage et al., 2020).

To overcome various issues and challenges that are related to online learning during crises, higher education instructors need to apply various strategies that could enable them to support students' online learning as well as increasing their efficacy and preparedness level in designing instructional activities that are not only engaging and meaningful but also inclusive (Khlaif & Salha, 2021; Mahyoob, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach by conducting a semi-structured interview via Microsoft Teams with two senior lecturers from the Engineering Faculty and Citra Centre, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. During this New Time, online interview is perceived to be most convenient method in gathering qualitative data. Researchers and informants are no longer constraint by geographical location as video conferencing tools have been widely available and accessible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Having interviews is a useful method to generate rich and thick characterisation throughout the data collection process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Gibbs, 2018). In addition, conducting an interview allows a research to explore "someone else's mind" and perspective (Patton, 2015, p. 426). Semi-structured interview was chosen due to its flexibility approach for gathering data as the interview questions are open-ended that allows the researchers to explore the participants naturally (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It offers opportunity for the researchers to explore pertinent areas to the study as well as the allowance to develop a rapport with the research participants through casual interaction (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A positive relationship between the researchers and the respondents is important as the researchers may use probing technique to gather a much richer and thicker data as well as ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006; Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interview questions were guided by the research

objectives, focusing on the pedagogical practices at higher education during time of crises as well as exploring on the recommendations in using digitalized pedagogy which proves to be more sustainable and future-ready. Prior the interview sessions, the researchers have prepared interview protocols (IP) for the session to guide the researcher while managing the interview processes.

3.1 Data collection and analysis

The interview took place from 9th June to 13th June 2022 and each interview with the participants lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. The duration of the interview depended on the willingness and readiness of the respondents to share their experiences. The interviews were conducted in dual languages; *Bahasa Melayu* and English. The interview session was later transcribed. The data extracted from the transcripts was analysed manually. To analyse the transcript, open coding was first done by breaking down the data into relevant categories; initial or axial coding, where categories were refined, developed and related; and selected coding where the central categories were tied together and related to other categories (Morse & Richards, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, the coding process needs to be systematic, insightful and rigorous. A researcher needs to have a clear insight of the raw data and avoid leaping ahead and foreclosing the analysis of the data. Rigour is also highly instrumental as researchers maintain “a systematic engagement with meaning and patterning across the entire dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 54). When interpreting the data, Creswell (1994) suggests for the researcher to be objective and critical and acknowledge any subjectivity while immersing oneself into the data in order to better understand and interpret the data. The interview transcripts and the code labels were later examined according to “inductive thematic analysis”, in which themes or patterns are identified with the data set “are strongly linked to the data themselves” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The process of theme development of the interview findings was based on the 6-step thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) (see Table 1). To ensure trustworthiness of the formulated themes from the transcripts, peer-checking strategy was adopted to determine the accuracy of the translated themes (Whiting & Sines, 2012). A collaborative effort between the research assistant and the research team was conducted during the process of coding in which suggestion of changes and modifications of the codes were done repeatedly until the whole research team managed to resolve any differences, thus able to arrive at a consensus of the finalised themes.

Table 1. Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1	Familiarising yourself with the data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Source: Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

However, in thematic analysis, Sundler, et al. (2019) stated that the clarity of its approach is not fully evaluate by other researchers in term of phenomenologically. They also added that “in hermeneutic phenomenological traditions, thematizing meaning can be understood as related to the interpretation of data, illuminating the underlying or unspoken meanings embodied or hidden in lived experiences” (cited in Sundler, et al., 2019, p. 734). According to Hallett (1995), the phenomenological approach has two important elements, which are rational and intuitive processes that focus on participants’ experiences, which allows researcher to explore results beyond “the factual accuracy than the plausible of an account” (cited in Cypress, 2018, p. 304).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Lecturers' readiness and preparedness

During the pandemic, we are aware that the pedagogical approach is very challenging for lecturers, especially for classes that require physically meeting such as engineering students who expected hands on assessments that involving laboratory work and calculations. According to respondent A, she mentioned that,

"... during pandemic time where everyone is shocked. Then, even when we asked lecturers to teach online, they refused. It's not possible they said, especially engineering that has a lot of calculations and some of them even asked how to teach this ..."

This statement also been agreed by Respondent B in saying that,

"... It is undeniable that there are some learning sessions that need to be first-hand and physically meet, that have lab work, or even the co-curriculum that is related to sports and cultures ..."

Although as a person who has the authority to make decisions, Respondent A must comply with the order given by the government based on the Standards Operation Procedure (SOP). She also expressed her remorse for not being able to assist the lecturers in terms of physical presence on campus by saying that,

"... we cannot do something because we are not allowed to come. Not given. [hesitating] meaning if [stuttering] we want to come we must ask for special permission related to the purpose of attendance, cannot come in large numbers, with distancing according to the requirements of the SOP at that time ..."

Respondent B also have the same view by sharing his opinion in this matter,

"... we just follow the instructions given. The university had to close ... That is when the little hiccup happens ... But we manage to settle it down ..."

Regardless, Respondent B also stated that the matters related to the transition of educational system should be familiar to the lecturers in terms of concept, philosophy, and approach because it has been highlighted by the Ministry of Higher Education. He states that,

"... when the pandemic hits, it just speeds up everything at the far front, which is all. So, whether you like it or not, ready or not, your device needs to be change, you need to have 4G or 5G internet. So, for those who have 3G, handphone that do not have camera, or outdated really cannot survive ... It is about readiness and then how you equipped yourself ... It is all about readiness and preparedness in every angle. The technologies, the people, and the infrastructure itself ..."

In addition, if we connected with the question of lecturers' readiness and preparedness, respondent A does state that UKM give a lot of training regarding online teaching method and platform to use as follows,

"... the university does provide that kind of support for lecturers to teach online. A lot. Use Ms Teams or create your own videos and upload them to our e-learning system. So, there are many ways and platforms that can be used. [hesitating] ... So, in terms of staff, I think ... if in this learning and teaching matter, UKM has a lot of training ... for the lecturers for online teaching ..."

Besides, Respondent B also emphasized on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy training among senior lecturers due to the fact that they do not have the skills to use current technology used in the education sector when answering one of the question given, which is "What kind of training should be given to educators especially the senior educators in order to prepare and enable them for future crises?". He mentioned that,

"Internet of things and it is related to learning by doing ... let say we do a challenge for the senior lecturers, which is uninstall Microsoft office and see whether they can survive or not by doing so ... now, mostly people running google cloud, google slides, Canva. That is the challenge for the senior lecturers. The "learning by doing" ... there is no longer chalk talks, where we ask if they understand, they will answer "yes". But when we asked to do, they failed. So, there must be an acid test ... But of course, in a big university or any other universities, there must be some resistant ..."

Moreover, the lecturers' readiness and preparedness are not only in terms of technological expertise, but it is also closely related to their emotional response which is also influenced by the personal commitment borne by the lecturers. Respondent A stated that,

"... Even there are lecturers who seem to insist on coming to the faculty, some say they can't focus at home ... especially for those young lecturers. It is understandable, at the same time as the meeting, they have to take care of their children ... sometimes there are also those who share a computer with their children. So, we will bring those things [stuttering] to the faculty and discuss with the management ... I think the faculty has given [stuttering] consideration"

In conclusion, even though lecturers are aware of the implementation of online education that has been highlighted by the Ministry of Higher Education, they are not necessarily ready and prepared to face the real situation when changes happen drastically as experience during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Some lecturers also refuse in handling an online learning due to their awareness in terms of pedagogical challenges, but they have to force themselves in adapting and adopting with the transitions that happened during the crisis.

4.2 The academic burden that was faced by the lecturers

Due to the lack of readiness and preparedness, physically and mentally, among lecturers with the transition in education that occur, they face several academic burden when it is associated with students. Respondent A stated that the challenging part is when it is involved with students' mental health. She mentions that,

"... lately I see many students who always claim that they have anxiety ... students now are not strong in facing problems ... Whether personal, family, or financial problems ... If in the past, there are rarely students who used to be [stuttering] even now the cases where students say they want to commit suicide, that thing seems to be quite common. It used to be hard to hear like that ..."

Respondent B also states that,

"... these are the things that if you put 100% online you really cannot get it. Students cannot gage the learning outcome ... the lecturers are the one who have to make the first move. The students [stuttering] should be ready and follow ... Both parties have to play their roles. But I do believe that proper planning by the lecturers will assist ..."

Additionally, the condition of students also plays a big role, not only in terms of mental health, but it also affects student engagement in class, which becomes a burden to the lecturer to ensure the stability of both factors. Respondent B states that,

"... we cannot deny that students also have various categories. We have B40, M40, and T20. All of this played a significant role in determining the impact of the learning ..."

While Respondent A adding support to the statement issued by Respondent B by saying that,

"... with situations at home that are not necessarily conducive to learning. So, it can also be one of the reasons why students find it difficult ... and then it will affect their level of academic achievements ..."

Because of the fact that the differences in students' social status, family background, and personalities, lecturers are also faced with the problem of getting students' attention during the online classes. Respondent A mentions that,

"... if online it's kind of difficult ... to get that attraction ... Even during the [stuttering] presentation, what we did was to ask them to prepare a video first to avoid technical problems ... then there was a question-and-answer session ... but in these matters, it was quite difficult for lectures. I also face the problem of [stuttering] how to make sure they really pay attention ... for me to ask a lot of questions ... if face-to-face we can see and go to them. But when online, if we ask, it's like we're the only one there. They are just silent and doesn't give any answer ... there are also, some lecturers ... make pop quizzes or games ... which is good to get students' attention."

However, lecturers also expressed dissatisfaction with the burden that they have to bear, which it does not stop here. The burden also involves the attitude and integrity of the students in carrying out the tasks given. Respondent A states that,

“... it is a common to get a complained regarding the group assignments, there is also a free rider. Usually, during the face-to-face classes used to exist as well. After all, when it's online, it's still like that and they [stuttering] really express their unsatisfied ... any member who really has a sense of responsibility to complete ... In the end, it was buried alone ... you already stressed during the covid era and that is added to the stress ...”

Respondent B also expressed his thought related to the students' attitude and integrity. He states that,

“... When they write a long essay, there is when the plagiarism happened because they tend to copy and paste from Google ... sometimes the lecturers themselves do not have enough time to check all the assignments given ... [hesitating] if the lecturers want to give a feedback to every students it would be not enough time.”

In conclusion, the duty of a lecturers is not only to teach and educate, but it also involves the lecturers' observation of their students' academic performance, whether they are in a good condition to implement the pedagogical approach that carried out during the pandemic

4.3 Pedagogical approach that was used by the lecturers

Due to the evolution in pedagogical approach from traditional to modern, from whiteboard to screen, and from physical classes to online classes. Lecturers need to come out with a new method of approach that are compatible with the current developments. According to Respondent B, he stated that,

“The most important is creating a short task rather than giving a long paragraph of assignments. The same goes for notes. From there we have social media such as TikTok, Instagram etc. ... So, these short tasks are being [stuttering] it is very helpful in terms of students' learning process From there they will build up their confidence ... we train the students to always be ready ... and of course it must be related to the assignment ... It is quite typical. I mean, the printed assignments have to be lessened, we are no longer dealing with that. But to the same extent it is not until there is nothing at all because they still have to produce the printed one when in the job scope ...”

Respondent B also underline that with the use of social media nowadays, indirectly sharpen students' writing and cognitive skills by indicating that,

“... How do you summarize things, how do you put it into a context, and what do you want to deliver from the image. This is what we call a copy writing. In copy writing we do not need to put a long paragraph because it is a very impactful statement. So, these are the skills that [stuttering] students should master with the world today ... you should be able to convey the idea in a copy writing form. So, this is what we call as submission in the new era ...”

Apart from that, Respondent A also indicate that there are other approaches that have been used in order to gather students' attention and understanding, by maintaining a conventional approach that is adapted according to the suitability of the new era approach. She does mention that,

“Some are simulations ... we also have a video that is uploaded for students to watch first ... and then interact with them by holding a question-and-answer session on things that are not understood, or maybe holding a quiz for them to answer, and we also have data from the last session as an assessment later need to be discussed with their classmates”

However, according to Respondent B, this new era pedagogical approach also has its own limitations by saying that,

“... we have to brief the students that is the art of doing things and there is a restriction. For instance, in a movie making sometimes when it comes to the brands, you must blur it, [stuttering] meaning the angle of third-party damages ... you have to be careful and there are also the dos and don'ts. It is not simply as you go there, record everything and done. The students must know the art of doing the tasks ethically. So, that is what we say [stuttering] the worrying part to the students. Sometimes when they are doing the tasks, they also do not aware if they are doing it right in term of copyrights or any human rights ...”

Moreover, when it comes to online education, it must be closely related to the internet network where the connection becomes a challenge not only for students, but also for the lecturers. Respondent A mentioned that,

“... by using my iPad... at the same time in Ms Teams ... I can scratch and scribble, it will be displayed later in Ms Teams ... it also can be recorded and uploaded ... perhaps the students can re-watch the video for revision use ... It's just that there is a little constraint [stuttering] it also depends on our Wi-Fi. There he is kind of lagged ...”

Furthermore, Respondent B also suggest eliminating the examination in the tertiary level. He notes that,

“... It is fine for the quizzes because it is progressively. Examination actually killing the students' creativity ... because you are playing with the time. It is very unfair for the students and then [hesitating] you did not produce a streak smart student; you are producing a bookworm ... It would be always assignment, presentation outputs etc. ... it is a project based, specific assignment types ... whether they can do it or not ... when the students understood what they learnt, it is easier for them ...”

From here we can identify that both respondents have different method of pedagogical approaches. According to Respondent A, she indicates that,

“... personally, indeed the best is face-to-face because of the human touch [hesitating] even though we are now moving towards digital etc. But I don't think we can deny that human touch. meaning here [stuttering] computer cannot understand the heart of a person, consideration, body language ... But we've been through a pandemic, and we've learned too ... even though we are now almost back to normal ... we also encourage lecturers to do face-to-face at least four times. So, the rest can be made online ... [hesitating] we can try to combine it ...”

Contradictory, Respondent B indicates that he would suggest an Experiential Learning and Competency-based Education Landscape (EXCEL) Framework form the Ministry of Higher Education, which is based on four core items, (i) Research Infused Experiential Learning (REAL), (ii) Industry Driven Experiential Learning (IDEAL), (ii) Community Resilience Experiential Learning (CARE), and (iv) Personalised Experiential Learning (POISE) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2021) to combat with crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. He also mentions that,

“... The students will spend more on ... the 4 core items in this framework ... [stuttering] the presence of students in the university or their dependency is very less, and they are more attached to the real world ... So, we are running away from the traditional education system ... This is what we called a future ready curriculum. There are no longer the “Graduate on Time” terms used. When you imposed graduate on time ... It becomes a hindrance factor for the students because they only focused on their studies ... all these things actually killing the future ready curriculum ... It is not to the extent no classes at all, but we have to keep that to the minimum.”

Nonetheless, both respondents agree with the fact that different programme have a different pedagogical approach although they have been exposed to the modern educational systems. Respondent B states that,

“... To some extent, I do agree that some programmes are not the same and cannot be done digitalized. There are some programmes that [stuttering] still using traditional way of learning ... but, I would say [hesitating] in term of percentage, maybe about 70% to 80% should be done online. In term of deliverable, tasks, assessment, and feedback system. Just remain the balance for the physical or psycho-motor related, and it always “learning by doing” ...”

In conclusion, although online education is a change that is a challenge for lecturers in determining the method of pedagogical approach, it is also seen as more flexible although less effective in terms of human touch, which includes consideration and body language.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis that have been done, this research clearly illustrates the lecturers' experience and perspectives in dealing and addressing the various challenges with the sudden educational shift triggered by the pandemic. Although lecturers do aware of the implementation of online education, they are not necessarily ready and prepared to face the real situation when changes happen drastically. Due to this fact, they faced several

challenges in the implementation of the pedagogical approach. Online learning may seem more flexible, but it also less effective in terms of human touch, which includes consideration and body language. However, this study also raises a question related to what is the approach that used by the polytechnic and vocational sector to prepare their students in the field of employment by maintaining practical performance. This is due to the scope of study is too small to obtain solid results. based on this conclusion, other researchers should consider the recommendations of this research for further study. To better understand the results, future studies could address a different point of view and gain more diversified data and information.

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Fake News in Malaysia: A Policy Understanding

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Abstract

Fake news has become a global issue due to its rapid expansion, especially on digital platforms. Through social media and digital platforms, people discuss a range of topics, from those that are common to those that are important for society and the state. Furthermore, people are much more likely to believe the news they find online and on social media than the news they find in more conventional mass media like radio and television. Modern countries were compelled to look for legal tools to combat this phenomenon because digital news platforms were frequently used to mislead large populations, which frequently resulted in grave repercussions. The Malaysian government has come up with the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA) and ordered the creation of an industry Content Code in 2004 to serve as the conduct standard for players in the communications and multimedia sector. Since the code is still only a non-binding industry standard, ensured compliance with the code is through regulatory and licencing restrictions. Between 2000 and 2018, the problem of fake news intensified to an extent that it caused chaos in society. Malaysian government established the Anti-fake News Act of 2018, which offers a comprehensive legal framework that makes it illegal to spread false information, whether it be online or in print. The study aimed to discover the meaning of fake news policy among digital news readers and to understand the influence of fake news policy on news readers' awareness of fake news. This qualitative study uses Thematic Analysis methods to interpret the pattern of meaning in qualitative data. It involves an interview with 15 digital news readers in Malaysia. The result expected can tell us whether the netizen understands what fake news policy is and how it influences the readers' awareness of fake news proliferation.

Keywords: Fake news policy making, fake news policy in Malaysia, fake news regulation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Fake news has become a global issue due to its rapid expansion, especially on digital platforms. Through social media and digital platforms, people discuss a range of topics, from those that are common to those that are important for society and the state. Furthermore, people are much more likely to believe the news they find online and on social media than the news they find in more conventional mass media like radio and television (Martynov & Bundin, 2020).

The fake news harmful effects on both people and society at large make it a serious issue (Shu, Mahudeswaran, & Liu, 2019). False or unverified information circulates online much like verifiable material does, with the potential to go viral and change public opinion and actions (Bondielli & Marcelloni, 2019). Fake news and rumours are the most common types of misleading and unverified information, which should be stopped as soon as possible to prevent their negative impacts. More Malaysian have been victims of cybercrimes since 2016, due to the prevalence of fake news on the internet (Wan Ahmad & Sulaiman, 2022).

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1.2 Problem statement

In digital platforms, information is spread fast and hence, policy and regulatory mechanisms should be put in place to control the dissemination of fake news. Modern countries were compelled to look for legal tools to combat this phenomenon because digital news platforms were frequently used to mislead large populations, which frequently resulted in grave repercussions (Martynov & Bundin, 2020). The emergence of fake news policies and regulations in the country looks can tame the aggressive fake news proliferation in digital news platforms however, how far people understand and are aware of the policy is unknown.

Controlling false news at a time when digital news channels are emerging is a difficult issue that begs for Internet control. On the Internet, false information travels more quicker than the truth, and eradicating it requires a lot of effort (Daud & Abd Ghani Azmi, 2021).

The researcher's dream is to develop a peaceful global society by promoting a fair, healthy, and secure online information and news dissemination ecosystem. Achieving that goal requires concerted efforts and cooperation between the government, industry players, content providers and netizens. People's understanding and awareness of the fake news policy may contribute to the great success in controlling false news dissemination.

1.3 Research questions

This study aims to discover the meaning of fake news policy among digital news readers and understand the influence of the policy on news readers' awareness of fake news proliferation. Hence, the following are research questions.

1. What does the fake news policy mean to digital news readers in Malaysia?
2. How does fake news policy influence the awareness of fake news among digital news readers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Fake news policy

The policy is defined as the legislation, rule, process, administrative decision, incentive, or government and institutions' volunteer practice (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). According to Cambridge (2022), a policy is a set of ideas or a strategy of what to do in a specific situation publicly agreed upon by a group of individuals, a commercial organisation, a government, or a political party. A similar definition was published by Collins (2022) who said, a policy is a set of concepts or initiatives that serve as the foundation for decisions, particularly in business, economics, and politics. There is no concrete definition of fake news policy, however, a statement by Facebook Policy (2022), mentioned the rationale of fake news policy is to reduce the spread of false news and provide information to the public without impeding constructive public conversation.

2.2 Local fake news policy

In the late twentieth century, the internet offered new channels for spreading false information on a much larger scale. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has identified widespread digital disinformation as one of the major challenges to our society as it spreads over online social media (Burkhardt, 2017). The calamity of fake news has triggered governments around the world to establish certain policies and regulations to maintain the safety of their citizen. Since wide Internet penetration in Malaysia during the ninetieth, the Malaysian government introduced the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA) as adopted Internet self-regulation in Malaysia. The Industry Content Code was drafted in 2004 as an industry guideline without statutory authority. Regulatory and licencing measures are enforced to ensure content owners' and industry players' compliance with the code. Three

methods are used to implement self-regulatory control: (1) passing laws, (2) issuing takedown notices, and (3) advocacy and education. The CMA's Sections 211 and 233 require anybody employing content application services, such as service providers, to refrain from distributing "false content" (Azmi, 2004; Daud & Jalil, 2017).

The increasing problem caused by fake news has divided society and existing laws are no longer able to control the situation. The Malaysian government started introducing a new act called the Anti-fake News Act 2018 to punish offenders related to fake news. This act allows perpetrators to face punishment up to a maximum of RM500,000.00 or 10 years in prison. However, until 2021 only one person has been sentenced according to this act (Daud & Abd Ghani Azmi, 2021). The implementation of this anti-fake news policy is seen as less effective where the spread of fake news continues without restrictions and few people are punished for the offence. The lack of effectiveness of this policy may also be due to the lack of public awareness and understanding of the policy made by the government.

2.3 Foreign fake news policy

Malaysia is not alone in enacting policies related to fake news even though the country was one of the first to introduce policies on fake news. Every civilized country enacts its own fake news policy to balance freedom of expression and the interests of society. The Canadian Criminal Code contains Section 181, which addresses fake news. Unfortunately, the Canadian Supreme Court had determined that the clause was unconstitutional because it violated the right to free speech because of *R v. Zundel* in 1992. The legislation had since repealed the clause; therefore it was no longer enforceable (Clarke, Barnhorst, & Barnhorst, 1977).

Following the worldwide trend, Russia also made a number of legislative choices in 2019 to stop the dissemination of false information online, which had varied effects on Russian society (Martynov & Bundin, 2020). The latest legislative changes in the Russian Federation, include the so-called "Yarovaya law," the "fake news" law, and the "disrespect" bill. It is demonstrated that the somewhat complex regulations under examination represent serious dangers to people's fundamental freedoms and human rights, such as their right to privacy and their ability to express themselves freely, and they also have other unfavourable impacts on Russian society and the economy (Moyakine & Tabachnik, 2021).

The European Commission in its set of worthwhile initiatives suggested establishing a constructive relationship with internet platforms, mobilising and coordinating fact-checkers, and advancing media literacy, as the goals (Renda, 2018). According to the author, self-regulation should be accurately monitored through the creation of indicators and the sharing of practices, which can drive innovation. The stepwise approach to regulation (first self-, then co-regulation if needed) advocated by the Commission is important. Avoiding strict solutions that might equate to censorship is necessary. In this area, command and control regulations are unable to provide significant outcomes.

In Germany, The Network Enforcement Act threatens social media corporations with fines of up to 50 million euros (US\$53 million) if they don't take down "clearly illegal" content within 24 hours of receiving a complaint (Claussen, 2018). The Act mandates businesses to block offensive internet content that needs further review within seven days, failing which a fine would be assessed. For transnational technology companies to cooperate with local law enforcement agencies on takedown orders, the Act required the creation of a local point of contact.

The issue of fake news is not one single issue. There are various signs of broader political and social developments as well as the ongoing evolution of news and media (Tambini, 2017). These call for action, but not government-controlled action, as governments can give in to the pressure to develop media systems that serve their political agendas. The establishment of a continuous forum for discussion of these issues, headed by civil society, and full protection from any risk of government meddling or capture by other interests, serve as the foundation for all the others.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The Research type of the study is qualitative using a phenomenological design where the researcher seeks out insights and personal experiences from Malaysian digital news readers. A qualitative research strategy in this situation comprises a bias-free and open-ended method (Ahmadu, 2019). Qualitative researchers are fascinated

by how people construct meaning, or how they make sense of their surroundings and their experiences in them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Each participant was expected to contribute knowledge that was unique to his or her experiences while also exposing the ideas and conventions that were fundamental to his or her culture (Thompson, 2018).

The primary data gathering method will be used is an in-depth interview with fifteen (15) active digital news readers who frequently read the news on digital news platforms such as (“The Star | Malaysia News: National, Regional and World News,” 2022) and (“Harian Metro,” 2022). The interviews will be conducted using phone calls or face-to-face methods. The researcher will employ a Thematic Analysis which is one of the most popular types of qualitative data analysis. The main goal of Thematic Analysis was to locate, examine, and interpret patterns of meaning in qualitative data. The researcher will use purposive sampling methods to gather the participants. The participants will be selected based on maximum variation sampling methods. The sampling method is chosen because of the easy method of sampling and the participants are selected based on various categories of readers and on their availability and willingness to take part. The data will be analysed using qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti to look for themes and make an interpretation of the phenomenon.

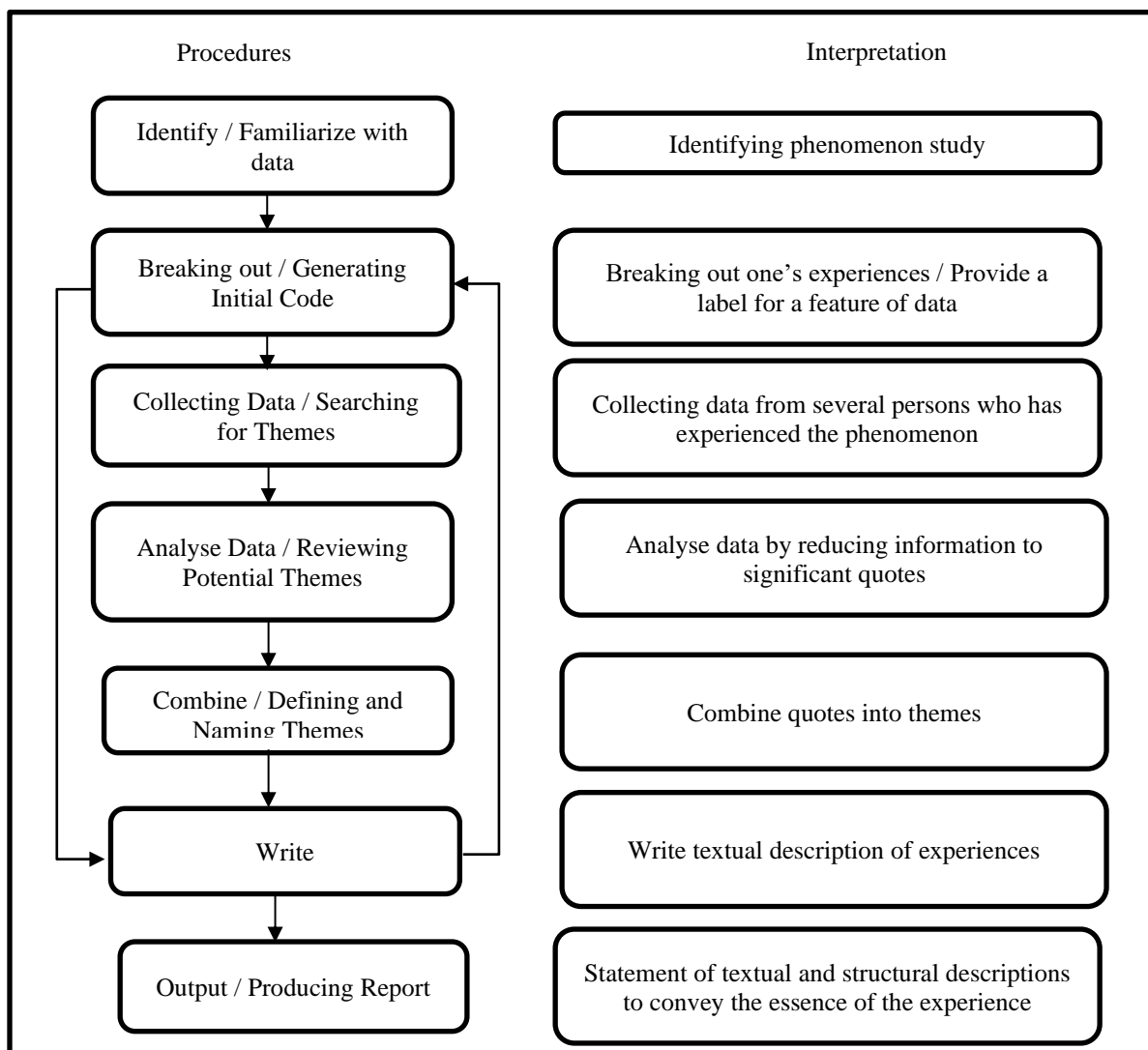


Fig. 1. Modified Procedures of Phenomenology Research based on Moustakas (1994) and Braun & Clarke (2012)

There are several methods for conducting qualitative research, but phenomenology is chosen for this study. This is because it gives extensive, first-hand knowledge of individuals' experiences (Nichols, Kotchick, McNamara Barry, & Haskins, 2010). According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological studies evaluate the texts with the

primary goal of describing the lived experience from the participant's perspective. Fig. 1 shows the modified procedures of the phenomenology research approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Moustakas, 1994).

3.2 Data collection method

In this study, the researcher uses an open-ended semi-structured in-depth interview to collect data. Since the participants were encouraged to speak openly, direct conversations with the participants can elicit the participant's sentiments, opinions, and emotions about a given topic. The advantage of conducting a personal interview is that it includes direct interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, which leads to an open-ended answer from the participant. In-depth interviewing is a subjective research method that entails directing intensified one-on-one discussions with a small group of participants to discover their viewpoints on a particular concept, programme, or scenario (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

The participants will each be asked five open-ended semi-structured interview questions to learn more about their understanding and awareness of fake news policy and how it influences fake news dissemination on digital platforms. To avoid any misconceptions, the researcher took care to frame all interview questions correctly. The purpose of the interview questions was to gather in-depth data to address the research objectives of the study. The steps in the data collection process are as follows:

- Getting approval to do the research.
- Potential participants receive emails containing all consent forms.
- All telephone interviews are scheduled.
- Setting up interviews.
- Transcribing interviews.
- Evaluating the data gathered.

The researcher uses an audio recorder application on a mobile phone when interacting with the participants. The purpose of audio recording is to capture the interview in a sensitive and detailed manner. Each interview is limited to ten (10) minutes. The time frame specified appeared practical, as it will allow the researcher and participants to get to know one another and gather the essential data.

The validity and verification of the data are the most common concerns that occur in qualitative interviews. According to Gani, Rathakrishnan, & Krishnasamy (2020), a pilot test is carried out with the goal of ensuring validity and verification in any research. In this study, a pilot test of the interview will be conducted before proceeding with the actual interview, adhering to an interview procedure that included a set of rules, guidelines, and questions tailored to the research questions. Several steps are ensured when conducting the pilot test that includes participants, settings, research instruments, and three procedures of interview session (pre-interview, during-interview, and post-interview) stages.

The pilot test interview allows the researcher to clarify and fine-tune several questions to improve interview techniques during the actual interview. The most crucial factor in choosing the number of participants is whether the data collected is saturated. Therefore, the target participants in this pilot test will be three (3) news readers who will be randomly selected from different locations in Malaysia. This indicated that the participants will be chosen in accordance with the sampling strategy and the study's objectives. The pilot test interview gave the researcher the chance to improve the interview process by helping to clarify some of the questions.

3.3 Sampling design

Sampling strategies or a specific plan for getting a sample from a part of the population is referred to as a sample design. In this study, a purposive sampling approach is used since a specific environment, group of people, or activities are purposefully chosen (Ahmadu, 2019). According to Salkind & Frey (2021), the researcher can employ purposive sampling to keep the number of possible participants to a minimum. There is a wide range of purposive sampling techniques available such as maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, typical case sampling, extreme case sampling, critical case sampling, total population sampling and expert sampling but maximum variation sampling is the best option which will best enable the researcher to answer research questions.

So, the study participants were selected using maximum variation sampling. For this study, the chosen fifteen (15) active digital news readers are those who frequently read news on mentioned digital news platforms in Malaysia.

A total of fifteen (15) participants will participate in the study, which is within the suggested size range for phenomenological research. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), the sample size for this research approach should be between 5 and 25 people who have a direct link to the study event. Another study by Englander (2012) said the researcher must allow the participants to have the necessary experience to respond to the study's questions while choosing sample size.

3.4 Data analysis expectation

Thematic Analysis is a method for methodically identifying, categorising, and illuminating recurrent patterns of meaning (themes) in a body of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). By concentrating on meaning across a data collection, Thematic Analysis allows the researcher to recognise and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. The authors introduce a six-phase approach to Thematic Analysis that will allow researchers to more quickly and confidently develop themes that require less reviewing and refining, especially if working with a smaller data set. Additionally, through familiarisation, researchers will probably gain deeper insights into their data, find the coding process to be quicker and easier, and be able to code at a more conceptual level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six stages of Thematic Analysis are phase 1, familiarisation with the data, phase 2, generation of initial codes, phase 3, theme search, phase 4, evaluation of prospective themes, phase 5, definition and identification of themes, and phase 6, report production. The analysis is expected to produce a more in-depth understanding of the meaning of fake news policy, news readers' awareness of the government's fake news policy and its influence on fake news dissemination in digital platforms.

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Enough is Enough! Celebrities' Cyberbullying Coping Strategies

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Abstract

Cyberbullying frequently occurs on social media. Celebrities, who have connected to their fans through social media, are frequent victims of cyberbullying. To date, the research focusing on celebrities' cyberbullying is minimal, therefore suffers limited knowledge of this area. Thus, celebrities' behaviours in coping with cyberbullying remain relatively unclear. This study aims to explore celebrities' coping strategies for cyberbullying. Adopting a qualitative approach, we interviewed ten celebrities to explore their coping strategies. In addition, we observed 30 celebrities' accounts on social media to understand their coping behaviour. The findings show that celebrities usually adopted technological coping, avoidance coping, emotion-focused coping, and active/aggressive coping strategies. The results contribute to the existing literature on cyberbullying studies, particularly cyberbullying towards celebrities.

Keywords: Celebrities, online bashing, coping strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite social media's benefits in creating and establishing friends networks, users should also be cautious of its potential harms due to uncontrolled and inattentive use (A. Ahmad et al., 2018). The capacity of social media that allows anonymity of the predators increases the act of cyber-aggression and victimization (R. Ahmad et al., 2018), such as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is not uncommon in the digital age and has almost become a norm.

Bauman et al. (2013) and Smith et al. (2006) defined cyberbullying as an "aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself." Handono et al. (2019) stated that everyone available on the Internet is not safe from cyberbullying, regardless of who they are. Cyberbullying victims can be in any age range, such as children, teenagers, and adults, race, gender, and social status, including public figures such as politicians, social media influencers and celebrities.

These days, more celebrities have become the target of cyberbullying (Kho & Chaw, 2018). According to Boorstin (1961) a celebrity is defined as someone who is widely known. Participation in a variety of fields can lead to celebrity status. In this study, we define a celebrity as someone who is in the state of being famous, particularly those who are involved in the entertainment industry, i.e., a singer, actor, or comedian. Being a celebrity does not make them resistant to being the victim of cyberbullying. Celebrities often become the target of trolls and receive a lot of threats, negative comments, and messages online. In South Korea, many cases related to cyberbullying

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have been reported. However, most perpetrators remain unpunished (Yi & Cha, 2019). There were several cases where South Korean celebrities committed suicide due to cyberbullying issues. Even though the perpetrators did not physically kill them, their cyberbullying behaviour can lead to mental distress (Harvey, 2020) and cause loss of lives.

In Malaysia, the consequences of cyberbullying related to celebrities are not severe compared to other countries. However, cyberbullying towards celebrities in Malaysia has recently raised concern as it has become more frequent (Mohammad, 2021). For example, a Malaysian celebrity was bullied after the leak of her video at an alcoholic party. This incident caused uproar and public dissatisfaction, especially from Muslim communities in Malaysia (Othman, 2019). The incident has induced online bashing because consuming alcohol is prohibited in Islam (Mohamad, 2020). With advanced communication technology and various social media platforms, it is easier for the community to express their frustration and anger towards that celebrity's behaviour. In addition, Muslim celebrities are increasingly expected to adhere to strict Islamic religious codes by the netizens (Alkaff, 2022). Alkaff (2022) argues that this phenomenon is rapidly increasing in Southeast Asia. It became a form of social discipline expressed by the comments made by certain followers on the celebrities' social media platforms. This toxicity may influence public perception by normalizing hostility and intolerance toward those who are perceived as different from them. Celebrities who seem to be defying these 'Muslim norms', particularly those who choose not to cover their hair, frequently face online bashing.

There has not yet been a suicide among Muslim celebrities in Malaysia. Nonetheless, this toxic culture has affected celebrities in many aspects of their lives, including their career, family, and mental health. The impact of cyberbullying includes the development of negative online reputations, which can have an impact on college admissions, employment, and other areas of life. It may even lead to more severe and long-lasting consequences like self-harm and suicide (Lu et al., 2020). In addition, cyberbullying victims may experience depression or commit suicide (Yi & Cha, 2019). Therefore, coping strategies are vital to control the negative impact on the victims.

Addressing these issues before it becomes more severe is crucial, as what happened to celebrities in South Korea. Furthermore, minimal studies have been conducted from the perspective of celebrities. According to Ouvrein et al. (2021), most studies on celebrity bashing have focused on the perpetrators and bystanders, as well as investigating the underlying factors that might explain involvement in the act of cyberbullying. Hence this study aims to identify the coping strategies taken by celebrities to protect themselves from the negative impact of cyberbullying. This study is hoped to contribute as a basis for prevention and intervention initiatives and generate an in-depth understanding of the coping behaviour of celebrities in cases of cyberbullying.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Celebrities are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying threats since they perceive fame, attention, and public adoration (Rutledge, 2020). There is some related work that involves cyberbullying and celebrities. Hassan et al. (2018) found that most social media influencers faced several types of cyberbullying, which are harassment, flaming, outing, masquerading, dissing, trolling and catfishing. Later, Saengprang and Gadavanij (2021) discovered that most South Korean celebrities receive online harassment, while British celebrities experience denigration and harassment according to the cyberbullying types.

The impact of cyberbullying includes the development of negative online reputations, which can have an impact on college admissions, employment, and other areas of life. It may even lead to more severe and long-lasting consequences like self-harm and suicide (Lu et al., 2020). In addition, cyberbullying victims may experience depression or commit suicide (Yi & Cha, 2019). Therefore, coping strategies are vital to control the negative impact on the victims.

Victimization in cyberbullying was associated with a lower degree of resilient coping (Han et al., 2021). Folkman and Lazarus (1980) define coping strategy as: "*Specific behavioural and psychological efforts, which individuals use to manage, reduce, minimize or tolerate stressful events*". Successfully dealing with cyberbullying involves using strategies associated with more favourable outcomes that aim to reduce the current bullying and prevent future victimisation (Orel et al., 2017; Perren et al., 2012; Völlink et al., 2013). On the other hand, unsuccessful coping is associated with strategies that inadequately address bullying and result in adverse outcomes.

Past studies have categorized the cyberbullying coping strategy into a few categories, as shown in Table 1. Meanwhile, some researchers grouped the coping strategies into (1) behavioural, (2) cognitive, and (3) social coping (Ouvrein et al., 2018). However, it is not easy to distinguish the coping strategies as some categories overlap. Hence some of the descriptions are interrelated with other coping strategies. For example, social support can be categorized under emotion-focused coping, as well as approach coping.

Table 1: Categories of coping strategies

Coping Strategies	Description
Emotion-focused	It aims to manage the emotional distress associated with the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). i.e., social support.
Problem-focused	Aimed at resolving the stressful situation or event or altering the source of the stress (Carroll, 2020)
Passive	It is characterized by helplessness and/or reliance on others (Snow-Turek et al., 1996).
Active/Aggressive	Deal with the pain using their resources (Snow-Turek et al., 1996). i.e., retaliation, confronting.
Approach	Allow for appropriate action and/or the possibility of noticing and taking advantage of changes in a situation that might make it more controllable (Roth & Cohen, 1986).
Avoidance	Avoidance strategy in dealing directly with problems (Roth & Cohen, 1986).
Technological	Entrust social media features to resolve the situation (Byrne, 2021).

Past research (Alipan et al., 2021; Andrysiak et al., 2022; Byrne, 2021; Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Völlink et al., 2013) show that there are inconsistent findings in coping mechanism adoption. This is supported by Orel et al. (2017), who argue inconsistent findings on getting social support as a coping strategy between traditional bullying and cyberbullying victims. Although seeking help may be able to help reduce the impact of bullying on psychosocial outcomes, past research shows that many schoolchildren choose to cope by doing nothing, ignoring, avoiding, or retaliating (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Völlink et al., 2013). As for the university students, the majority rely on help-seeking approaches and technology coping methods (block the bully, change privacy settings). Technological coping is consistent with the growing social media cyberbullying pattern (Alipan et al., 2021; Andrysiak et al., 2022; Byrne, 2021; Varela et al., 2022). Many university students entrust social media settings to resolve the situation (Byrne, 2021).

Meanwhile, past research found three coping categories adopted by celebrities: (1) behavioural (i.e., retaliate), (2) cognitive (i.e. positive thinking), and (3) social (i.e. seeking support) (Ouvrein et al., 2021; Ouvrein et al., 2019). Nonetheless, this finding is limited to a group of reality TV celebrities. Hence, more exploration is needed to give more explicit pictures of the problem.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study involved both semi-structured interviews and content analysis. The semi-structured interview method is used for this study as they are designed to extract the interviewee's ideas and opinions on the topic of interest, relying on the interviewer to ask relevant follow-up questions based on the answer given by the participant. Meanwhile, content analysis is a proper qualitative method due to its content-sensitive nature and ability to analyse open data sets (Kyngeäs, 2020).

We interviewed ten celebrities (i.e., singers and actors) known to get harsh comments or be cyberbullied by netizens. Data from content analysis and semi-structured interviews were analysed and coded using deductive coding, where the codes are derived from the data. In addition, we analysed the social media accounts (i.e., Instagram and/or TikTok) of 30 celebrities to identify how they cope with harsh comments. Only accounts with public settings were chosen to address the human ethics issue. The celebrities' accounts were selected randomly based on the number of followers. All chosen accounts have more than 100K followers. The data from the content analysis were used as triangulation.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Our findings show that the celebrities' coping strategies while facing cyberbullying include: (1) technological coping, (2) avoidance coping, (3) emotion-focused coping, and (4) active/aggressive coping. The details will be discussed next.

4.1 Technological coping

Most cyberbullying cases related to celebrities happen on social media. Hence technological coping is the most adopted strategy by celebrities. Many celebrities consider technical solutions the most effective strategy for stopping cyberbullying. For example, the participants chose to delete the comments or block the predators to stop the predator, as shown in the following excerpts:

“Delete the horrendous comment and block their accounts.” (Participant P1)

“Block them from accessing my account.” (Participant P3)

These findings support past studies by Alipan et al. (2021), Andrysiak et al. (2022), Byrne (2021), and Varela et al. (2022). They claim that victims rely on the facilities provided by social media platforms to cope with cyberbullies.

4.2 Avoidance coping

Many of the participants claim that they usually ignore the hostile or harsh comments on their social media, which is under the category of avoidance strategy, which is consistent with past research (Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Völlink et al., 2013). The following excerpts show the evidence:

“I honestly hate it because it promotes too much negativity, but it is also my responsibility to ignore them.” (Participant P2)

“I have to ignore the negative and focus on the positive stuff. They (celebrities) should ignore them because responding to them will only worsen the situation.” (Participant P4)

“I ignore it.” (Participant P7)

Some celebrities do not respond to cyberbullying because they are responsible for representing their company image, as shown in the following excerpt:

“As a person who works for an established public company, I have a social responsibility for the company’s brand to be neutral and not judgmental. That is my main reason not to react emotionally to cyberbullying.” (Participant P10)

An avoidance strategy could help with slowing down the attack towards the celebrities. However, although the avoidance strategy has been widely adopted in the case of cyberbullying, past research has shown that the strategy has internalized symptoms, which raises the victims' chance of depression (Grant et al., 2013).

4.3 Emotion-focused coping

Some of the participants said that they should seek support, as shown in the following excerpts:

“It would be best for us to take time before responding and seek support from people around them.” (Participant P9)

This finding is consistent with Ouvrein et al. (2021) who found that most celebrities choose social coping strategies (seeking help) when they experience cyberbullying. Support from the celebrities' circle is crucial as it can make the victim feel that they are safe and not alone.

4.4 Active/aggressive coping

One of the coping strategies adopted by celebrities is an active/aggressive coping strategy. Our findings support the claim from earlier research which argue that retaliation is one of the solutions to cope with cyberbullying (Bastiaensens et al., 2019; Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Ouvrein et al., 2019; Perren et al., 2012). Retaliation falls under active/aggressive categories. Some of the celebrities chose to explain or defend themselves when they were

attacked, as the following excerpt:

“If it gets out of hand, I normally will defend myself.” (Participant P6)

However, often the retaliation worsens the situation. For example, participant P8 asserted that starting a war with the bully would bring in more people and escalate the situation. Participants P9 and P3 share the same sentiment, as shown in the excerpts:

“Most victims tend to lash out and respond without giving it much thought – typical responses would be along the lines of ‘I do not care about what you think; I am just being me’ or trying to attack the bully in return.” (Participant P9)

“It worsens if we respond personally because we might do something unnecessary base on that particular emotion.” (Participant P3)

Based on the content analysis, we found that retaliation frequently creates a cycle of bullying towards predators. The content analysis data discovered instances in which celebrities' fans attacked the predators. It started when the bully made derogatory remarks on the celebrities' pages using their actual account. Most of the time, the celebrity's devoted fans will react when she responds to the attack. Then, the fans counter-attack the predator. Often the family members will also suffer the attack. The state of harassment is quite intimidating and at times, the predator was eventually forced to deactivate social media accounts to reduce the impact.

Our findings also show that if cyberbullying involves more significant issues, such as slandering and catfishing, some participants believe that firm action should be taken. This type of cyberbullying could damage their reputations and affect their job as endorsers for some products.

“If it is getting out of hand, I would lodge a police report, especially if it involved tarnishing my reputation as a public figure” (Participant P3)

“If the harassment continues, I usually report them to the Police.” (Participant P8)

The celebrities believe that the police report will be an easy way out as many haters or bullies are likely to stop harassing after the police report.

“Cyberbullying happened because there is a lack of enforcement in monitoring social media and the internet.” (Participant P9)

They believe that local authority is a problem solver for this issue.

“Police is the one who will help us in this issue.” (Participant P1)

Based on content analysis and interview data, once the police are involved, usually the predators will issue a public apology. Hence the harassment cycle stops.

5. CONCLUSION

Celebrities are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying threats since they perceive a lot of fame, attention, and public adoration (Rutledge, 2020). They are generally perceived as having a higher social status within a community. Therefore, social media accounts are necessary to create and maintain their follower base (Soo, 2016). Hence, mass media and their followers expose their lives to be judged and critiqued. In the entertainment industry, it is worse that there are too many victims, bullies, and bystanders in a picture. Therefore, it is not easy to control the cycle of cyberbullying. Consequently, celebrities need to be educated to adopt suitable coping strategies that can improve their well-being as a victim.

Based on the findings of this research, this study proposes that celebrities should try not to worsen the condition, as it could bring more harm. Celebrities should evaluate the condition and get opinions from family and friends before deciding how to cope with cyberbullying. To help celebrities cope with the situation, celebrities, as well as

the public, also need to be aware of the impact of cyberbullying. They need to get involved positively, whereby an effective measure would be to train them not to reinforce cyberbullying. This can be done in many layers. For example, as role models, celebrities play a vital part in educating their followers to avoid responding to cyberbullying. They may need to delete any harsh comments on their social media accounts to avoid unnecessary cyberbullying-related problems. In addition, the ethics of using social media should be trained from a very young age.

This study is expected to bring insight to plan initiatives to control the negative impact on the victim of cyberbullying. In addition, it generates an in-depth understanding of the coping behaviour of celebrities. Further study could focus on a more significant sample of celebrities, as well as the roles of bystanders in helping them cope with cyberbullying.

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A Proposed Framework of the Digital Supply Chain Management Implementation by a Manufacturing SME Using the Diffusion of Innovation Perspective

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Abstract

As the digitalisation becomes vital in the global business environment in this Fourth Industrial Revolution Era (IR4.0), the awareness of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) towards the implementation of digitalisation is also concerning. Recently, the Malaysian government has expressed its resolution to propel the Malaysian SMEs into digitalisation to seize a higher national gross domestic product (GDP). In daily business operations, one of the areas that can be digitalised is the supply chain management (SCM). The digitalisation of the supply chain management (DSCM) will assist the SMEs in effectively handling the goods from the point of raw materials purchase until reaching the end customers. However, recent data showed that many SMEs are still resisting in implementing DSCM, while the rest are slowly moving towards implementing the DSCM in their businesses. Thus, it is imperative to further understand what has driven the SME towards the implementation through the perspective of the diffusion of innovation theory (DOI), as presented in this study. Through the proposed framework which is derived from the original theory itself, this study intends to prolong the existing understanding on this issue and provide a direction for future researchers who have intense captivation in the same area of study.

Keywords: Small and medium enterprises, industrial revolution 4.0, digital supply chain management, diffusion of innovation

1. INTRODUCTION

As an entity that comprises of 99% businesses in Malaysia, it is undeniable that the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are recognised as the key contributor to the country's economy due to its pivotal roles in high gross domestic product (GDP), increasing employment rates, and the availability of export activities (SME Corp, 2015). The SMEs can be categorised into manufacturing and service sectors according to the specific criteria that need to be fulfilled by each sector. From a total of 1,151,339 SMEs registered in 2020, about 58,439 or 5.1% are the manufacturers (SME Corp, 2020). Due to the important parts played by the large number of manufacturing SMEs, there is an immediate call by the government for these SMEs to shift towards digitalisation, which can potentially boost their competitiveness and at the same time, place Malaysia as the primary smart manufacturing spot that can grab the high technology investments opportunities (MITI, 2018).

In this emerging fourth industrial revolution (IR4.0) era, Malaysian organisations need to understand the technology enablers that are available and best suited for their business activities (Tarofder, 2011). Despite the massive acceptance for the IR4.0 among global businesses, a study by Teh, Idris, and Aris (2020) has revealed that majority of Malaysian SMEs are still lagging behind large corporations in embracing IR4.0 in their operations. According to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Malaysian SMEs' development in general, is moving slowly and less competitive than the SMEs in the neighbouring countries, with its digital implementation is still considered as embryonic (EPU, 2021a). Based on the digitalisation readiness assessment carried out among the

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Malaysian SMEs, it can be concluded that these SMEs have realised the importance of the digital technology and innovation, however, there is no urgency for them to invest in digitalisation as they are still being cautious about it (Goh & Lee, 2017; SME Corp, 2018).

In manufacturing, the supply chain management (SCM) plays a vital role as the brand owners put their reliance on the manufacturers to create their products that are getting more complicated (Weaver, 2019). In this current fast paced business environment, even the SMEs will be occupied with thousands of products, and hundreds of customers and suppliers that need to be managed daily or weekly, hence, the need of having more effective and efficient SCM (Vuolle, 2016). The rising vitality of the SCM to enhance the operational performance of businesses including the SMEs has driven the SCM to be one of the areas that can be potentially digitalised (Saryatmo & Sukhotu, 2021).

Digitalisation of SCM (DSCM) strategies provide firms with flexibility and agility that may potentially create more values (Buyukozkan & Gocer, 2018) and help the firms to attain the competitive advantage, where they will be able to efficiently address the changing needs of the customers (Seyedghorban, Tahernejad, Meriton & Graham, 2020). However, there is still a significant gap identified between the Malaysian organisations, particularly the SMEs and global brands with regards to the DSCM implementation (Rajagopal, Tan & Loo, 2018). As a comparison to the developed countries, the digitalisation in back-end business processes including the SCM among Malaysian SMEs is only 10%, leaving a question of whether the local SMEs are actually ready for the transformation (Abod, 2017). A conference discussing on the DSCM in 2017 has also concluded that Malaysia is still at the infancy part of the DSCM, considering the less participation of supply chain members in IR4.0 in Malaysia (Rajagopal et al., 2018).

Albeit the previously-mentioned finding regarding the low awareness of the implementation, some of the SMEs have realised the importance of IR4.0 and start embarking on the digitalisation journey in their operations, including their SCM (Yunus, 2020). Therefore, this study attempts to understand the process of the decision-making towards the implementation and the reasons that have driven a local manufacturing SME to implement the DSCM, when most of the SMEs are still reluctant to do so. Furthermore, this study also intends to identify the SME's current stage of DSCM implementation. By using the innovation attributes from the diffusion of innovation theory (DOI), this paper proposes further study to be carried out through a qualitative case study approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

According to the definition provided by the SME Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp), SMEs are the registered entities that must fulfil 3 (three) conditions, such as qualifying criteria, type of establishment, and shareholding structure. Specifically, the requirements for the manufacturing SMEs are RM50 million or less for the sales turnover, comprising 200 full-time employees (SME Corp, 2020). As mentioned in earlier section, Malaysia SMEs are still way behind large firms in exploring the IR4.0, even though some of them have started shifting towards the implementation. Therefore, it is intended that more SMEs will gain the awareness through a clearer path towards the transformation, considering a number of benefits offered by the DSCM implementation, aided with various initiatives taken by the government to stimulate the efforts towards digitalising these SMEs (Lee, Azmi, Hanaysha, Alzoubi & Alshurideh, 2022).

EPU has enforced few programmes under the 11th Malaysia Plan for the SMEs, as an effort to enhance technology implementation among these businesses. This resulted in 528 SMEs went through the technology audit and assessment, while 1,159 more gained their productivity improvements from technology intervention projects under the Standard and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM)-Fraunhofer programme. These projects involved mechanisation and automation, technology enhancement, localisation of technology, packaging and labelling, training and consultancy for standards compliance as well as export-related technical advisory (EPU, 2021b). As for the recent 12th Malaysia Plan, it is aimed at elevating digitalisation in addition to getting the existing technology improved, to promote economy growth through the use of high technology. To put Malaysia as a key player in global supply chain, measures such as capitalising on the potential of advanced technology, boosting Research, Development, Commercialization and Innovation (R&D&C&I), integrating digitalisation for inclusive development, and enhancing digital economy are put on the list (EPU, 2021b).

2.2 Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0)

Initiated by the German government in 2011, the term IR4.0 describes the technological changes in manufacturing that looks forward to having a coherent policy framework to maintain the global competitiveness of German industry (Tay, Lee, Abdul Hamid & Ahmad, 2018). The manufacturing sector can be economically benefitted from the IR4.0 through lower production costs, value creation networks, and new business models (Schroder, 2016). Malaysian SMEs are not an exception in getting the advantages from the IR4.0, including the cost effectiveness and enhanced efficiency of demand capacity management (Abod, 2017). Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) revealed that the recent outbreak has woken up the SMEs worldwide, including in Malaysia to embrace the digitalisation as it helps them delivering better customer experience and boosting the momentum of digital implementation (MIDA, 2020).

2.3 Digital Supply Chain Management (DSCM) in Manufacturing

As demonstrated by MIDA, DSCM is the transformation of a conventional SCM into a digitalised form, which emphasises on the connectivity, system integration, and the utilisation of smart technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, big data analytics, and internet of things (IoT) (MIDA, 2021). An example of the application of DSCM in manufacturing sector is through the use of robot to enhance the flexibility and automation of processes. The intelligent storage locations enable an automated data transfer, which reduces the latency between product consumption and information transfer process to the manufacturers (Farahani, Meier & Wilke, 2015). 3D printing helps to mitigate the issue of location in production line due to its flexibility in producing parts anywhere, without consuming much working space. The transparency of SCM could also be improved through the existence of digital logistics systems that provide the real-time geo-located shipping, which means the real-time data of the products' whereabouts (Buyukozkan & Gocer, 2018). In Malaysia, the application of the DSCM can be seen in Music Tribe company, which has its entire supply chain digitalised; from the design, manufacturing, e-commerce marketing, and after-sale services. Another example is Smart Modular Technologies through the establishment of Smart Supply Chain Services Management Centre that effectively handles its SCM using big data, cloud computing, and real-time analytics technology. The DSCM practice of both companies has created job opportunities for the locals (MIDA, 2021).

2.4 Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI)

This study follows the DOI, which is developed by Everette M. Rogers as the theoretical basis to explain the diffusion of digital technologies towards the DSCM implementation by a manufacturing SME, as proposed in this study. According to Tarofder (2011), this theory has a strong theoretical background, especially on the diffusion process part. To be specific, this study utilises the decision-making process in innovation, innovation attributes, and the adopters' categories to discuss the process of DSCM implementation by the SME, reasons for the SME to implement the DSCM, and SME's stage of implementation, respectively. The flow of this study is guided by the proposed framework as depicted in Figure 1 below, which is adapted from the theory. Further discussions on each element of the DOI are presented in the next subsections.

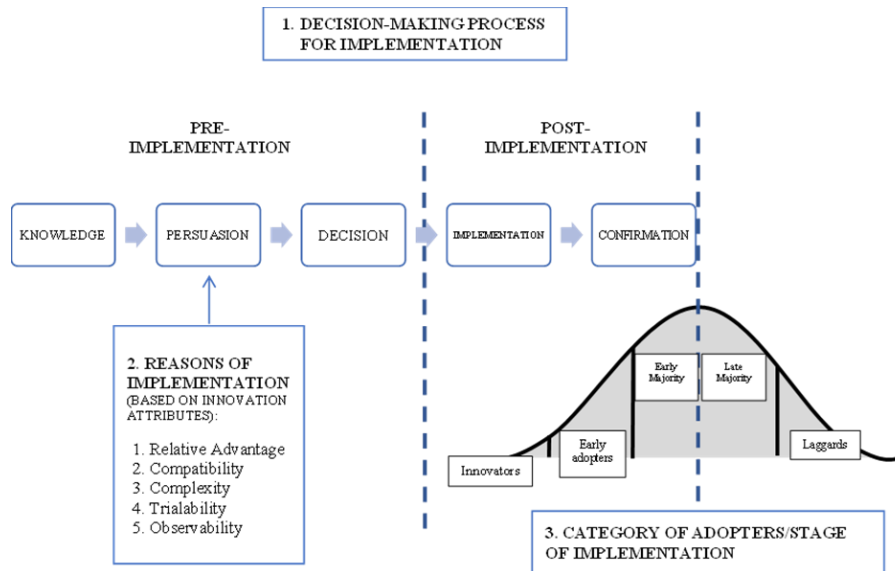


Fig. 1. Proposed framework of the study

Adapted from Rogers (1995)

2.4.1 Decision Making Process in DOI

In DOI, there are 5 (five) stages of the decision-making process, starting with knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and lastly, confirmation. These stages are also known as the communication channels that will be passed by the users at a different level of usage, according to the levels of the adopters. Precisely, the adoption levels influence the level of innovation usage or diffusion (Rogers, 1995). According to the author, the process of diffusion starts when at least one of the society members starts using new products or services, which marks the start of the diffusion of the idea. From there, any activity and decision that occur before and during the implementation will influence the diffusion process, clarifying that the process does not start only after the innovation (Rogers, 1995). The author further explained the stages of the decision-making process as featured in the DOI, as below:

- Knowledge occurs when individuals have exposure on innovation and its function
- Persuasion occurs when individuals have either favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the technology
- Decision occurs when individuals engage in activities that conclude either to implement or reject the innovation
- Implementation occurs when individuals are using the innovation
- Confirmation occurs when individuals seek for re-enforcement on a decision that has already been made, or reverse the previously made decision to adopt or reject the technology

2.4.2 DOI Attributes in DSCM Implementation

In the theory, Rogers has developed the innovation attributes that explain various rate of innovation adoption that occur before the implementation, precisely at the persuasion stage. These attributes, which are based on the expectation of the individuals comprise of 5 (five) such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 1995). A study by Hartley, Sawaya, and Dobrzykowski (2022) has employed the innovation attributes from DOI such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, and trialability to understand the factors that influence an organisation's intention to implement the blockchain in SCM. The employment of the same attributes is also done to discover the determinants of the use of disruptive technologies in the DSCM, as studied by Mitra, Kapoor, and Gupta (2022). From a Malaysian context, Tarofder (2011) has carried out a study to identify the critical success factors for the successful use of Web technologies in SCM of local organisations through the application of complexity and trialability as the measurements.

Firstly, relative advantage is where the individuals perceive innovations to be better than the idea it supersedes. This study proposes that the manufacturing SME perceives the DSCM implementation could provide benefits to the company and its supply chain partners compared to not implementing it. Compatibility is where an innovation

is expected by the potential users to be consistent with current values, previous experiences, and the needs of future adopters. This study suggests that the manufacturing SME considers the DSCM to be compatible with previous usage and the needs of the SME to implement the DSCM. Complexity is when the individuals assume an innovation is difficult to understand and use, where only few innovations are easily understood by most social system members. In this study, it is proposed that the manufacturing SME is driven towards the DSCM implementation because it is less complicated to be understood and less trainings are required.

Next, trialability is explained as the innovation that can be tested on a limited basis. The proposition of this study is that the manufacturing SME becomes more certain and confident of the function and benefits of the DSCM implementation after experiencing it on the instalment plan. Observability is defined as an innovation that can be observed by individuals. This study assumes that the manufacturing SME becomes persuaded to implement the DSCM after witnessing the success of the implementation among its supply chain partners or other users.

2.4.3 Category of DSCM Adopters in DOI

In DOI, the adopters can be categorised into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 1995). Firstly, the innovators are the users who usually implement the new ideas earlier than other members of a system. Next, the early adopters tend to be the group of people who tend to be the most influential ones and can potentially be the leaders to other potential adopters. However, these users may not much be the risk takers, unlike the innovators. Meanwhile, the early majority are those who typically spend wisely on products due to the limited resources. They are known as the risk averse adopters who usually seek for opinions from the thought leaders regarding the adoption decision. Late majority are a group of users who have lower social status and are often being sceptical about the adoption. These users rarely communicate with the thought leaders and they utilise their resources only for the solutions that have been tried and tested. Last but not least, the laggards, who are known as the highly risk averse and are usually the last to implement since they prefer the traditional methods to do things. Laggards rarely seek opinions because they are less familiar with the technologies (Rogers, 1995). By using the category of adopters in DOI, this study proposes to identify the current stage of the SME as the adopter in implementing the DSCM in its organisation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Case study

The notable proponents of the case study design are Robert E. Stake, Sharan Merriam, and Robert K. Yin, whose epistemological stance on case study are different from each other. As this study leans towards the interpretivism, the viewpoints from Stake (1995) are taken into consideration. Acting as an interpreter and gatherer of the information, a case study researcher can potentially add experience to readers based on their notions of knowledge and reality that have been gathered through their investigation. The necessary and crucial steps in conducting a case study are including the research questions construction, data collection, as well as data analysis and interpretation. A case study protocol will be helpful to guide the researchers to conduct the case study (Stake, 1995).

The researchers intend to conduct the study qualitatively by using a single case study approach. The decision to do a single case study is appropriate since the researchers are focusing on understanding a case or participant (Yin, 2018) and at the same time attempting to get a deeper understanding on a particular subject through revisiting old theoretical relationships or discovering the recent ones (Gustafsson, 2017). Furthermore, a qualitative case study allows the researcher to maintain the key features of the real-life phenomenon by emphasising on the complex issues (Gaya & Smith, 2016). Furthermore, the use of qualitative method for case study offers the researchers with flexibility in data collection (Stake, 1995).

The data for this study will be collected from multiple sources such as semi-structured interview, observation, and documents review. The motivation to choose these qualitative methods is driven by the flexibility in collecting the data without having to rely on numerical data, especially to profoundly comprehend the reasons why the SME is persuaded towards the implementation of DSCM in its business. The qualitative methods also enable researchers to describe, explain, and develop the explanatory models and theories, besides observing the reality (Morse & Field, 1996). The researchers propose a food manufacturing SME located in Penang to be studied as the case, since the preliminary study conducted has shown that the SME has implemented the DSCM in its organisation.

3.2 Preliminary Study

As being previously-mentioned, the potential case for this study is a food manufacturing SME in northern region of Malaysia, specifically in Penang that has implemented the DSCM since 2014. First of all, the primary reason of selecting the food manufacturer as a potential participant is due to its large domination in the Malaysian SMEs. As of January 2022, the statistics by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) has indicated that the food and beverages industry has become the largest subsector that contributes to the sales of the manufacturing sector by 20.6% from the total value of RM139 billion (DOSM, 2022). Furthermore, food manufacturing industry is also regarded as the core contributor to the country's economy due to its promising demand (Saidon & Mat Radzi, 2015). As for the selection of the manufacturer in general, is due its high rate of employments, which constitutes a total number of employees of 2,274,146 as of January 2022 (DOSM, 2022).

The researchers have initiated a preliminary interview with the potential case for few reasons. Firstly, the visit is intended to create a good rapport, in order to make the next steps of the study become smooth. Secondly, this visit is also aimed to identify whether the activities and operations of the SME in terms of DSCM implementation suits the main objective of the study. And last but not least, the initial interview is conducted to test whether the questions asked meet the requirement of the study and the potential participant's activities. After the preliminary interview, the researchers will further enhance the interview questions for the actual data collection.

Based on the results obtained from the preliminary interview conducted for this study, the SME has become the pioneer among the SMEs in northern region resulted from its early implementation of the DSCM. To date, the SME is implementing a number of DSCM practices such as digital logistics through the use of tracking system to locate the products based on the real-time data, the application of system integration to interact and share the information with other supply chain partners. Another DSCM implementation by the SME is the digital production system through the use of automation in its machineries for faster and more accurate production process. Through this conceptual study, it is also proposed that the SME has passed the fourth stage, which is implementation stage and is currently in the confirmation stage. In this last stage, the SME decides to continue the DSCM implementation. The SME is also planning to expand the implementation into more digital technology such as cloud computing in the future once the infrastructure of the industrial area where the SME is located gets better. By revisiting these stages, further study is proposed to identify the SME's current stage of DSCM implementation and its next decision in the implementation, whether the SME still needs the implementation or chooses to revert.

4. CONCLUSION

Due to the increasing importance of the DSCM in today's businesses especially for the SMEs, this study suggests for a deeper exploration on the DSCM implementation by the manufacturing SMEs, which can be done through an empirical study. By using a qualitative case study approach, this study proposes the issue to be studied from the perspective of the DOI, as depicted in the developed framework. The decision-making process for innovation in DOI represents the process that the SME had to go through to implement the DSCM in its organisation. The employment of the attributes of innovation from DOI is ideal to understand why the SMEs are motivated to implement the DSCM is seen appropriate due to the ability of these attributes to identify the elements of either the implementation or non-execution of the DSCM by the SMEs. Lastly, this study also utilises the category of adopters in DOI to identify the SME's current stage of implementation. Further exploration on this issue is expected to produce the outcomes that may benefit both the industry and academia, specifically to boost the motivation towards the implementation and provide the direction for future studies, respectively.

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Development of the Program Learning Outcomes based on the Rabbani Kelantan Education Policy: Its Importance in Human Capital Development

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Abstract

Accreditation of a program requires effective learning outcomes, documented procedures, tools and action to close the assessment loop. The concern for the assessment of learning outcomes derived from society's requirement to get a hold of skilled graduates in various fields. In this context, the development of learning outcomes (LO) especially for higher education is an important requirement. Following the launch of the Rabbani Kelantan Education Policy (DPRK) and the instructions for its implementation at the level of higher education institutions in the state of Kelantan by the Menteri Besar of Kelantan on 25 February 2018, this study was conducted to examine the initiative to develop program learning outcomes (PLO) at Sultan Ismail Petra International Islamic University College (KIAS). For this purpose, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Five respondents were selected using purposive sampling. The respondents consisted of a panel of DPRK draftsman experts, a panel of MQA assessors and a core team representative of Outcome-based Education (OBE) at KIAS. Based on semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study found that the PLO development initiative at KIAS is significant and has the potential to be developed as a complementary PLO in any higher education institution. In conclusion, the DPRK is seen to have solid aspirations that can contribute to the development of higher education pathways.

Keywords: Development, programme learning outcomes, Rabbani Kelantan Education Policy, human capital

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of a program is ultimately assessed by the ability of the students to carry out their expected roles and responsibilities in society. Therefore, any academic program could only be established successfully provided that there is a clear picture of what can be achieved at the end of it. In this context, the program can only commence if its learning outcomes are specified.

Learning outcomes are like maps and work as a tool to lead the journey. Even if the traveller is lost, they will find the intended route back. Similarly, learning outcomes are tools to guide the students in fulfilling the desired results of the planned program (Suskie, 2018; Millet et al., 2008). Program learning outcomes (PLO) are essential elements for any educational institution to decide on appropriate pedagogies and teaching methods that are effective to be used for students' learning. Learning outcomes focus on the measurable cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal development of students as they interact with a learning activity. They are what students are expected to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes upon completion of a learning experience

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(Ashiem, Gowan & Reichgelt, 2007; Adam, 2004). Therefore, the statements should be written and easily understood by the faculty, students, staff, administrators and external constituencies. Each set of outcomes should be comprehensive for a specific discipline and measurable as well (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Klein-Collins, 2012).

In the context of higher education, international trends have shifted away from the teacher-centred approach that emphasizes what is presented, towards the learning-based model focusing on what students know and can do. According to Gosling and Moon (2001), an outcomes-based approach to teaching is more prevalent at an international level. This approach has been progressively adopted within the credit framework and by the national quality and qualifications authorities such as the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) in the UK, and the Australian, New Zealand and South African Qualification Authorities.

In addition, the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, known as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, & Krathwohl, 1956) is one of the most recognized learning theories in the field of education. Educators often use Bloom's Taxonomy to create learning outcomes that target not only subject matter but also the depth of learning they want students to achieve and then create assessments that accurately report on students' progress towards these outcomes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Using action verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy will help ensure the outcomes are measurable.

Practically, Bloom's Taxonomy is a hierarchical design of ways of thinking (action or performance verbs) that classifies learning or cognition into six levels; categorized from less to more complex (Suskie, 2009). It comprises three learning domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, and assigns to each of these domains a hierarchy that corresponds to different levels of learning. It is important to note that the different levels of thinking defined within each domain of the Taxonomy are hierarchical. In other words, each level subsumes the levels that come before it. In 2001, David Krathwohl and Lorin Anderson published a revision to the 1956 hierarchy with contributions from cognitive psychologists, curriculum theorists, instructional researchers, and testing and assessment specialists. This new revised version introduced a key change to the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy: it shifted the language used from nouns to verbs and focused the attention away from acquisition toward the active performance of the types of learning involved in each stage of the hierarchy.

In December 2005, the Malaysian Cabinet decided to merge the National Accreditation Board (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara, LAN) and the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of the MOHE. This merger created the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), the single quality assurance agency in the country, whose scope now covers both public and private Higher Education Providers (HEP). The Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 (MQAA, 2007) assigns the responsibility for quality assuring higher education in Malaysia to MQA. One of the responsibilities is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a reference point for Malaysian qualifications.

MQF serves as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for national qualifications. It is an instrument that classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria that are approved nationally and benchmarked against international best practices. These criteria are accepted and used for all qualifications awarded by a recognized HEP. The framework clarifies the academic levels, learning outcomes and credit systems based on student academic load. Hence, the MQF integrates all higher education qualifications. It also provides educational pathways through which it links these qualifications systematically.

Academic programs are the building blocks that support the larger vision and mission of the HEP. Therefore, one must take into consideration these larger institutional goals when designing programs to ensure that one complements the other. The quality of the HEP and the program that it offers is ultimately assessed by the ability of its graduates to carry out their expected roles and responsibilities in society. This requires a clear statement of the competencies, i.e., the practical, intellectual and soft skills that are expected to be achieved by the student at the end of the program. The main domains of learning outcomes cover knowledge, practical and social skills, critical and analytical thinking, values, ethics and professionalism. The levels of competency of these learning outcomes are defined in the MQF (Sun & Lee, 2020; Awang-Hashim, Kaur & Valdez, 2019).

Based on the overall understanding above, this study was conducted to examine the initiative to develop program learning outcomes (PLO) at the Sultan Ismail Petra International Islamic University College (KIAS) based on the Kelantan Rabbani Education Policy (DPRK). The effort is an innovation in the context of higher education development and functions as part of the indicator of the level of sustainability of education development in the state of Kelantan. Overall, this study found that the DPRK has solid aspirations that can contribute to the development of higher education.

1.1 A brief overview of Rabbani Kelantan Education Policy (DPRK)

Generally, the Rabbani Kelantan Education Policy Idea (DPRK) which was launched on 25th February 2018 is an educational development idea resulting from the outburst of the Strategic Plan *Merakyatkan Membangun Bersama Islam* (MMBI) on 6th May 2014. MMBI is an integrated program plan to ensure the core issues of the way of life The people of Kelantan are more stable based on the principles of religious life (Mohamad, Adnan & Yusoff, 2016).

Following the implementation of the MMBI Strategic Plan, on 8th November 2015, the Kelantan State Government established the Kelantan Teacher Training Institute (ILPK) which functions as the secretariat of the Committee for Human Development, Education, Higher Education, Science and Technology, Kelantan State Government (Yaacob Yusoff 2017). Through the ILPK platform, the Kelantan State Government has initiated the Kelantan Rabbani Education Policy (DPRK). The policy contains 9 principles of Rabbani education and 46 best practices which are the core elements of its implementation (Umar et al. 2020). In conclusion, the 9 principles of DPRK can be understood in Table 1.

Table 1: Main List of DPRK Principles

DPRK PRINCIPLES		
Principles (P)		Description
P1	Knowledge Purposeful of Allah	The knowledge demanded is based on and directed to God.
P2	Priority of Knowledge & Jurisprudence	Education is aimed at producing individuals who understand the priority level of knowledge and achieve a level of expertise in their field.
P3	Becoming a Noble Person	Educate individuals towards the formation of a civilized and virtuous personality.
P4	Practice & Spread of Knowledge	Translating knowledge in daily life and spreading it to others.
P5	Continuous Learning & Study	Improve knowledge, and skills and cultivate study continuously
P6	Development & Community Reformation	Educating individuals towards developing society and doing reform.
P7	Shared Responsibility	Individuals who are aware of the nature of responsibility in developing themselves and society together
P8	Corresponding to Current Reality	Education that produces individuals who are sensitive to the latest developments that move in line with Islamic patterns
P9	Sustainability of Knowledge	The quality of education that emphasizes the validity of sources, integration and continuous change of disciplines

(Source: Researcher Analysis; Umar et al. 2020)

Based on his philosophy, the development of the DPRK aims to expand the scope of education to include Islamic education and other fields. With the DPRK, the Kelantan State Government intends to spread the Rabbani philosophy to all other institutions, especially in Kelantan. DPRK is also conceived as an agenda to popularize DMBI which is oriented towards the concept of UMI: *Ubudiyyah* (worship), *Mas'uliyah* (responsibility) and *Itqan* (precision). (Umar et al. 2020). In the context of higher education, the Kelantan State Government intends to make KIAS a model for the implementation of DPRK in the state of Kelantan (Yaacob Yusoff 2017).

Accordingly, on 25th February 2018, Kelantan Menteri Besar Dato' Haji Ahmad bin Yakob entrusted the implementation of DPRK to KIAS. Ultimately, the trust given to KIAS shows the importance of the DPRK in shaping the development of education to produce *Rabbani* graduates who are competitive and uphold good quality human capital for the state, society and the country.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to examine the initiative to develop program learning outcomes (PLO) at Sultan Ismail Petra International Islamic University College (KIAS). For this purpose, A qualitative research approach was adopted. Five respondents were selected using purposive sampling. The respondents consisted of a panel of DPRK draftsman experts, a panel of MQA assessors and a core team representative of Outcome-based Education (OBE) at KIAS. Data were obtained via semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

To complete the analysis of the objective, this study also examines the impact of the DPRK-based PLO development initiative from the perspective of human capital development according to the Islamic perspective. Thus, the analysis carried out can portray a comprehensive and holistic assessment.

3. FINDINGS

KIAS is the only institution of higher education under the state government of Kelantan that is carrying the mission and vision of the state government in making the DPRK a success. Despite this, KIAS is still bound by the study standard that needs to be followed, which is the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) where MQA has set five clusters incorporating 11 domains of learning outcomes (LO) that must be demonstrated in every program offered. Even so, the MQA does not limit the number of LOs to be achieved by any HEI as long as the LOs specified in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF 2.0) are complied with.

Technically, DPRK-based curriculum development initiatives at KIAS are focused on strengthening learning outcomes (LO) in each program. Since receiving the rating as a University College in 2021, KIAS has developed a total of eight new undergraduate programmes, one diploma program and two foundation programmes by applying *Rabbani* principles as the 12th PLO. KIAS also received MQA approval to offer all its new programmes. The relevant programmes are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. List of New Programmes offered at KIAS

No.	Programmes	Reference No.	Date of Accreditation
1	Sarjana Muda Syariah dengan Pengurusan Halal (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15034	06/09/2021
2	Sarjana Muda Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15035	06/09/2021
3	Sarjana Muda Tahfiz Al-Quran dengan Pengurusan (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15036	06/09/2021
4	Sarjana Muda Pengajian Islam dengan Pengurusan (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15038	06/09/2021
5	Sarjana Muda Sains Komputer dengan Multimedia (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15039	08/10/2021
6	Sarjana Muda Usuluddin dengan Pengurusan (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15070	06/09/2021
7	Sarjana Muda Bahasa Arab untuk Tujuan Khusus (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15071	06/09/2021
8	Sarjana Muda Pentadbiran Muamalat (Kewangan Islam) (Kepujian)	MQA/PA15072	06/09/2021
9	Diploma Teknologi Maklumat	MQA/PA15066	08/10/2021
10	Asasi Pengajian I'Dadi	MQA/PA14518	16/04/2021
11	Asasi Pengurusan Perniagaan	MQA/PA15037	04/10/2021

(Source: MQA 2021 Website, The list of KIAS Provisional Accreditation Certificates)

Referring to Table 3, all eight new undergraduate programmes at KIAS contain the addition of the *Rabbani* cluster in their respective LOs. The process of its application as the 12th domain of Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) was drawn up on 23rd December 2020. The domain contains 4 out of 9 DPRK principles. Meanwhile, the remaining 5 DPRK principles were found to be contained in the 11 basic domains that have been set in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) 2nd Edition (Rohaidi Habil, 2021; Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2017). *Rabbani's* domain statement that has been approved by KIAS is as follows:

“Understanding and performing obligations (P1) as a Muslim (P3) capable of preserving knowledge (P9) for the development and reformation of society (P6) in line with the goals and core values of Rabbani education”

In a more specific context, KIAS stipulates the application of the *Rabbani* domain as the 12th LO implemented on compulsory college subjects. Next, gradual amendments will be made to the subjects of other categories according to the needs and suitability of the program. Accordingly, KIAS is also committed to making amendments to incorporate the *Rabbani* domain into the LO of the study programs that were offered before KIAS was upgraded as a University College. The basic framework of the application is stated in Table 4.

Table 4. Mapping of compulsory college subjects to LO *Rabbani* (LO12th)

No	Subjects	CLO – LO MQF	CLO – LO12 th
			(CLO description and taxonomy level)
1	Pengajian Al-Quran I	CLO1 – LO1 CLO2 – LO5	CLO3: Students will be able to make general conclusions regarding the truth that the Quran brings with a true understanding of the Quran (A4, PLO12)
2	Pengajian Al-Quran II	CLO1 – LO2 CLO3 – LO9	CLO2: Students will be able to display the manners of reading, listening, and appreciating the Qur'an as guided by the companions of RA and authoritative scholars. (A5, PLO12)

3	Pengajian Al-Quran III	CLO1 – LO1 CLO2 – LO9	CLO3: Students will be able to recite chapter 30 from surah an-Naba to surah al-Ghaashiya with correct pronunciation and <i>tajwid</i> (A5, PLO12)
4	Pengajian Al-Quran IV	CLO1 – LO2 CLO2 – LO9	CLO3: Students will be able to recite chapter 30 starting from surah al-Nas with correct pronunciation and <i>tajwid</i> by memorization (A5, PLO12).
5	Bahasa Arab I	CLO1 – LO1 CLO2 – LO5	CLO3: Students will be able to increase the potential for self-skills in using basic Arabic (A1, PLO12)
6	Bahasa Arab II	CLO1 – LO1 CLO2 – LO5	CLO3: Students will be able to improve the effectiveness of communication based on language quality. (C3, PLO12)
7	Bahasa Arab III	CLO1 – LO1 CLO2 – LO5	CLO3: Students will be able to preserve the use of the Arabic language in learning and life. (A1, PLO12)
8	Preparatory English	CLO1 – LO3 CLO2 – LO4	CLO3: Students will be able to demonstrate their English language skills with particular emphasis on Islamic content on reading, writing, listening and speaking (A3, PLO12)
9	English For Islamic Studies	CLO1 – LO2 CLO2 – LO5	CLO3: Students will be able to practice the usage of Islamic terms in formal or informal situations (A5, PLO12)
10	Communicative English	CLO1 – LO2 CLO2 – LO5	CLO3: Students will be able to practice the usage of Islamic knowledge in formal or informal situations (A5, PLO12)
11	Common Values	CLO1 – LO1 CLO2 – LO4	CLO3: Students will be able to practice the knowledge they learn and interact with the community (A4, PLO12)

(Source: Farhanim Leman, 2021)

Based on Table 4, a total of 11 compulsory college subjects have been applied to LO *Rabbani*. The LO is specifically set in one of the three learning outcomes of each course (CLO). Therefore, Table 4 concentrates on the evidence discourse where each CLO is based on PLO12 which focuses on P1, P3, P6 and P9 of the DPRK. The research results of each CLO mapped to PLO12 have contained the required DPRK core values.

In discussing the level of clarity of *Rabbani's* PLO development, this study has conducted semi-structured interviews with two representatives of the DPRK's expert panel of drafters. In general, Respondent 1 (R1) and Respondent 2 (R2) agreed on the KIAS initiative to develop PLO *Rabbani* as a complement to the 11 basic domains that have been set in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) 2nd Edition. The comments of both as indicated in the following quotes:

“The act of creating the 12th PLO based on the DPRK is relevant and can prove the solidity of the DPRK's vision and mission in the higher education curriculum” (R1)

*“The idea of creating a PLO *Rabbani* must be ensured not to conflict with the provisions of MQF 2.0. If complement each other is better. The value of parallelism between *Rabbani's* PLO and the 11 basic domains in the Malaysia Qualification Framework needs to be ensured”* (R2)

Meanwhile, the results of the interview with the MQA evaluation panel on the development of PLO *Rabbani* also showed a positive reaction. In this regard, the MQA 1 (R3) evaluation panel and the MQA 2 (R4) evaluation panel have provided critical comments on the KIAS initiative. The explanation is as indicated in the following quotes:

“KIAS as HEP needs to ensure that the elements contained in all four DPRK principles that make up PLO12 are truly contained in the CLO statement that has been decided. The evidence for each CLO involved needs to be improved to reflect the unique identity of the DPRK” (R3)

“To strengthen the proposed development of the PLO, KIAS needs to display justifications that prove the differences and special features of the PLO compared to the 11 basic LOs that have been listed in the MQF. Referring to the selected taxonomy level, KIAS can vary its selection so that it does not overlap between different CLOs.” (R4)

Based on the comments, this study has received a response from the core team representative of Outcome-based Education in KIAS (R5). The explanation is as indicated in the following quotes:

“We acknowledge that this initiative is still in its early stages. We are just at the stage of building the implementation model. Our intention is actually to carry out a comprehensive transfer up to the aspect of selecting subject content. We want to make sure that the subject content of each study can realize the aspirations of the DPRK. However, this process takes a long time.” (R5)

To empower the development of PLO *Rabbani*, this study has received additional comments from R2 and R4 following the response to the first question. Both suggestions are as follows:

“KIAS can discuss expanding or adding other DPRK principles, other than those contained in the 12th PLO by including them in the content of the subject” (R2)

“A periodic review should be done by the HEP to ensure that the structure of the program that implements PLO *Rabbani* meets the current requirements” (R4)

Overall, this study found that the development of DPRK-based learning outcomes is significant. The application concept has the potential to be applied in various study programs at the higher education level. In theory, the integrity of *Rabbani's* PLO can only be evaluated and proven after the students complete the learning of the subjects involved. In a larger framework, KIAS as a provider of higher education needs to ensure that the DPRK's core values are successfully manifested in the entire study program it offers. Through it, the majority of graduates who will be produced will display qualities that are consistent with the aspirations of the DPRK.

3.1 Application of the 12th LO into the subject of the graduate prerequisite

In line with the DPRK application agenda in the development of new programmes at KIAS, aspects of KIAS student development under the supervision of the Student Affairs Division (HEP) also receive optimal DPRK policy touches. Among the main improvement agendas that have been implemented by the KIAS Student and Alumni Affairs (HEPA) department is the implementation of student *usrah* as a compulsory subject. *Usrah* can be understood as a gathering for the conduct of religious activity, such as a discussion regarding a certain topic (Ibrahim, Kamsani & Champe, 2015). Starting in 2011, the official of the student *usrah* was named Smart Group (SG) and was gazetted as a compulsory course which became a requirement for KIAS students' graduation. At that point, the content of SG was developed based on the aspirations of the *Membangun Bersama Islam* Policy (MBI) (Idris Awang et. al 2018).

Recently, in parallel with the implementation of DPRK in KIAS, SG has been purified and named *Usrah Rabbani* (UR). Its status as a compulsory subject that is a requirement for KIAS student graduation is maintained. In practice, UR is implemented in small groups and managed by a *naqib* (facilitator) selected among students. For this purpose, each selected *naqib* is required to attend the *Naqib* Empowerment Camp (KPN) every semester before being allowed to conduct UR. Overall, the implementation of UR for 10 weeks in each semester is closely monitored by the Student Development Unit, under the HEPA section of KIAS.

Referring to the UR subject structure, every student is required to go through a total of four UR modules, which are arranged in the first four semesters of study at KIAS. Throughout the four UR modules, students will be exposed to a holistic curriculum covering the study of *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), hadith, *Sirah* (biography of the Prophet PBUH) and *fiqh harakat* (jurisprudence of movement). The curriculum combination is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Curriculum Combination of *Usrah Rabbani* KIAS Module

NO	USRAH RABBANI MODULE	SEM	CURRICULUM / SUBJECT STRUCTURE			
			TAFSIR Total Verses	HADITH Total Topic	SIRAH Total Topic	FIQH HARAKAH Total Topic
1	Module 1	1	49	6	4	0
2	Module 2	2	12	6	3	6
3	Module 3	3	14	5	5	5
4	Module 4	4	10	6	4	0
TOTAL			85	23	16	11

(Source: *Usrah Rabbani* KIAS Module: 1-4)

Based on Table 5, in general, the curriculum combination that has been built is balanced and comprehensive following current needs. Although the entire content of the UR curriculum contains the *Rabbani* core values listed in the DPRK, the mapping of the module content to the 9 principles of the DPRK has not yet been refined. Overall, the development of the UR curriculum at KIAS is still in the early stages of the modelling phase based on the DPRK implementation targets at the Kelantan state level.

To assess the relevance of the UR subject that has been gazetted as a prerequisite subject for graduation at KIAS, this study only conducted semi-structured interviews on R1 and R3. Both comments were sufficient to represent the DPRK drafting expert panel and the MQA evaluation panel. The description is as indicated in the following quotes:

"There is no problem with KIAS if they want to make UR a requirement for graduation. UR is suitable to be a complementary platform for a comprehensive understanding of the DPRK" (R1)

"Practically, MQA does not prevent HPT from setting any subject as a prerequisite for graduation as long as it does not conflict with MQF or burden students excessively". (R3)

Referring to the comments of both respondents, the implementation of UR at KIAS is relevant and suitable to be applied as a complementary platform for the manifestation of understanding of the DPRK. Technically, each HEP has the authority to determine the best learning approach based on its respective vision and mission.

4. DISCUSSION

The prospect of this study which focuses on KIAS as a higher education institution that is an indicator of the stability of the DPRK is based on several factors. First, the foundation of the establishment of KIAS is based on the Kelantan *Membangun Bersama Islam* Policy (MBI) which was announced in 1990. Second, KIAS has also received a mandate from the Menteri Besar of Kelantan to implement DPRK at the higher education level. Third, KIAS as a provider of higher education is subject to MQA and MQF 2.0 guidelines. Fourth, the most effective initiative in designing study programs is oriented towards precise learning outcomes.

To understand the following factors, this study has examined the documentation of the vision and mission of KIAS since its inception. In 1996, the Kelantan Darul Naim Foundation Board Meeting (YAKIN) Bill 1/96 agreed to establish Kelantan Islamic College. The concept is oriented towards integrated education through the implementation of a systematic Islamic higher education system. The main aspiration of its establishment is to produce people who are pious, skilled and able to play a role in the development of the state and the country (Mohamad et al. 2016; Kelantan State Information Secretariat, 1995; Kelantan Islamic College Establishment Paper, KIAS/Pol/0.1/98/1). Later, the decision to establish Kelantan Islamic College was successfully translated into the official establishment of KIAS on 24th August 1999. The idea of its establishment was to produce pious people, parallel to MBI policy which is based on the principles of UMI. Accordingly, KIAS has set the philosophy of its establishment to produce a generation of al-Quran scholars who excel in terms of knowledge and are committed to practising it (Yaakob & Hamat, 2003).

Thus, the continuation of the above aspirations has prompted KIAS to be mandated by the Kelantan State Government as a pilot platform for the implementation of DPRK at the level of higher education institutions. In addition, the prospect of DPRK implementation at KIAS is also supported by its status as a provider of higher education having been upgraded to a University College (Zaman, Saleh & Ab Hamid, 2022).

4.1 The implementation of PLO Rabbani is a catalyst for human capital development.

Starting in 2022, KIAS has offered a total of eight new undergraduate study programs, one diploma program and two foundation programs by applying *Rabbani* principles as the 12th domain of program learning outcomes (PLO). Meanwhile, Diploma and foundation programs have yet to be implemented. The offer of the new program is based on the demands of P1, P2, P3 and P4 DPRK. Meanwhile, the application of the *Rabbani* domain as the 12th PLO is oriented towards DPRK's P1, P3, P6 and P9. The combination of the two efforts symbolizes the seriousness of KIAS's commitment to developing the quality of education based on the DPRK. Therefore, the existence of the PLO is also a key indicator of the successful implementation of the DPRK at the level of higher education institutions (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2017; Aziz et al. 2012).

In the context of student development, KIAS's commitment to implement UR as a major initiative is a manifestation of DPRK's P1, P3, P4, P6 and P7. The UR curriculum is equipped with all 9 *Rabbani* core values and functions as a complementary mechanism for the implementation of Rabbani LO. The UR implementation method that uses the services of *naqib* among students is also a significant step toward improving the skills and appreciation of KIAS students towards the philosophy, vision and mission (DPRK).

Based on the study of the *Rabbani* generation's development efforts, each studentship program at KIAS has been set to focus on P3, P7 and P8 of the DPRK, to ensure the sustainability of human capital development that is competitive and beneficial to the community and the country. The initiative is clearly in line with the concept of human capital development which emphasizes that every activity should be carried out within the framework of the *Rabbani* concept (Norasid & Abdullah, 2019). In other words, every consideration or action in life aims to make Allah SWT a guide and a source of guidance (Baba, 2006; Rahim & Nordin, 2019). Accordingly, the main practice attributed to God under the *Rabbani* concept is comprehensive, covering all knowledge, devotion and survival needs (Zaman, Saleh & Ab Hamid, 2022; Ismail et al. 2020; Duruzah 1964; al-Qawsi 2006).

Ultimately, holistic human capital development needs to contain three main components: the application of knowledge, the strengthening of faith and identity building, and the building of organizational and preaching skills (Hawwa, 1994). Al-Ghazali (1999) asserts that responsibility and trust are two important values that need to be built into a Muslim's identity. Through it will be born the attitude of precision in the Muslim personality (Ismail, Siwok & KZ, 2020; Shuhari & Hamat, 2015; al-Ghazali, 1999).

Thus, it can be concluded that the model of human capital development based on the idea of MBI policy and the principle of UMI has proven to be successful in producing quality generation in Kelantan and Malaysia in general (Mohamad & Adnan, 2017). In continuation, the idea of DPRK today is seen as having the potential to improve the quality of human capital development. Specifically, KIAS bears great functions and responsibilities in the process of fulfilling these aspirations, in line with the purpose of its establishment (Umar et al. 2020; Awang et al. 2018; Yaacob Yusoff 2017; Rokhman, 2010).

Overall, this study found that the DPRK-based PLO development has many advantages and holistic benefits in the context of human capital development that is needed by society and the country.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study on the development of DPRK-based learning outcomes in the development of education at KIAS show its potential as a major Islamic higher education institution under the auspices of the Kelantan State Government. The prospect of hope placed on KIAS in leading the development of higher education based on the DPRK philosophy is significant even though the development of its achievements is still at the modelling stage. Thus, the orientation of the DPRK in KIAS is seen to be able to contribute to the development of the national education system through a sustainable and holistic mechanism. The LO *Rabbani* model developed by KIAS also has the potential to generate quality human capital that is needed by the community and the country. Finally, this study suggests that the development of national education in the present day should comprehensively inculcate *Rabbani* elements.

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Islamic Definition of Water Ownership: A Case Study of Aflaj System in Sultanate Oman

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Abstract

The falaj systems (plural aflaj), the most ancient aqueduct in Oman, not only a technique to convey aquifer water naturally, but also hold water distribution institutional knowledge based on Muslim jurist view. Currently, several villages and towns in Oman still hold this knowledge using different water rights categories and it passes from generation to generation. Although the literature support there exist three types of aflaj in Oman (duadi, ghaili and ayni), large variation with respect to water extraction process exist. Hence, this paper investigates, through a fieldwork case study the extent such variation influences Islamic definition of irrigated water ownership. The study concluded the fact that the ongoing and operated institutional arrangements historically were initiated upon the water extraction variation among the three aflaj types, hence they innovated two common rotation systems locally known as raddat and sharib.

Keywords: Water ownership, institutional arrangements, water rights, flow rotation.

1. INTRODUCTION

While it is clearly mentioned in the Holly Quran¹ that Allah almighty created from water every living thing, availability of water is required in almost all aspect of day-to-day activities. This had led mankind over history to innovate and develop water rights and associated institutional arrangements. The main purpose for such development is to regulate and govern natural watercourse through what is known as water law/water doctrine. For example, fast body of literatures discussed the newly developed water market policies and mechanism in allocating water within two existing water doctrines: prior appropriation and riparian water in many countries (Milliman, 1965; Senzanje & van der Zaag, 2004). In addition, other researchers innovated and developed what known as water tradable rights (Rosegrant, Schleyer, & Yadav, 1995)).

However, these were faced/challenged with water physical characteristics because any attempt to define and insert private ownership such factor tends to reflect upon managerial strategy. From the early-stage Randall (1981), Milliman (1965) and young (1986) clearly conclude that the physical nature of the resources is to be blamed for the difficulty of asserting a private ownership. Given the difficulty in arriving and defining water ownership concept along with

¹ Do the disbelievers not see that the heavens and the earth were one mass, and We tore them apart? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not believe?" (Chapter 21 verse 30),

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associated water right classification, this paper main purpose is to contribute toward such matters using three main variables: 1) physical water extraction variation of the naturally flowing watercourse 2) ancient *aflaj* system operated in northern of Oman 3) Islamic water law and the customary arrangement (*urf*). Note while the issue of water rights ownership and their associated institutional arrangements is not yet fully evaluated using empirical data, empirical knowledge with specific guidance from Omani Islamic point of view will be presented. In addition, much of ancient tradition knowledge has values which, in our view, different from those found in western literatures, where very little studies or documentation carried out. Finally, worldwide the issue of the ancient systems and associated inherited management knowledge is viewed as an important indigenous knowledge within the area of water management. For example, Trawick (2001) wrote "... a fresh look at organization through case studies which look at the history and broad cultural environment of, and non-vertical relationships in new types of organizations which do not conform to the bureaucratic model".

2. PROBLEM BACKGROUND

As earlier mentioned, that water is considered as a necessity element in our day-to-day activities and at the same time treated, when analysed, found to be a very complex commodity to manage. Since 1960s researchers and water professionals continuously suggested and introduces regulatory measures and solutions to ease water management complexities. Jerome Milliman, properly one of the earliest water scholars in the United State, clearly emphasize in one of his studies (1965) that the problem of water resources appears to be not one of inadequate supply, but rather of rational allocation among competing users. He pointed out that it is a managerial crisis. Followed this study most of the western water researchers concentrated on two main output criteria: 1) equitably using water property rights (institutional setting) (Dietz, 2003; R. M Saleth & Dinar, 2004; R. Maria Saleth & Dinar, 2005) and 2) efficiency using water market approach (Bitran, Rivera, & Villena, 2014; Easter et al, 1999).

The first water problem, extensively carried out by western researchers, is concerned with how to implement the concept of equability and efficiency along the two existing common water laws. For example, although priority date system (or prior appropriation) (Senzanje & van der Zaag, 2004) used volumetric as basis for water allocation among users, two main problems have been identified. First, it operates against new water right holder and thus going against the principle of equity. Second, it has been found to be too rigid in a dynamic environment thus failing on the principle of efficient use (Senzanje & van der Zaag, 2004). The second water problem deal in resolving the difficulties arise in arriving at equal distribution during water scarcity. In many countries worldwide there exist large number of small, irrigated farms which located between two main extremes: tail and head. Coward (1979) and Trawick (2001) discussed such problem using case studies from Peruvian Andius, northern Phillipian. For example, Trawick argued that even though all holders assigned parcel of land arranged perpendicular to the source of water and located within blocks of increased distance from the water source, does not overcome the problem of the located irrigators in the tail and head of the pattern of the parcel. However, he clearly mentioned that community dispute of water allocation between the trail parcel plots and head slightly reduced.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIED SYSTEM

In Oman, located within arid climatical environment, there exist unique hydro-geological rocks and oasis. This natural phenomenon resulted in a high level of water table/aquifers, accumulated over thousands of years. Within such circumstance, settlers innovated techniques to extract water supply from these aquifers. The most known technique is the ancient *aflaj* system which fall into three main types: *daudi*, *gaili* and *ayni*. Historically, irrigated water, in this arid region, have been collected from two main sources: the surface water and groundwater. It should not be confused by using the term 'surface' water with the concept of surface water collected from river and lakes. In this region the surface water has been collected through the accumulated rainfall over the oasis (locally refereed as *wadis*). This technique widely operated in the northern part of the country where an *aflaj* system known as *ghail* have been operated and constructed. In contrast, groundwater supply extracted water deeply from an aquifer using long tunnel and without the use of any mechanical devices (gravity natural flow). From this process, *aflaj* system known as *daudi* and *ayni* have been constructed (see Figure 1).

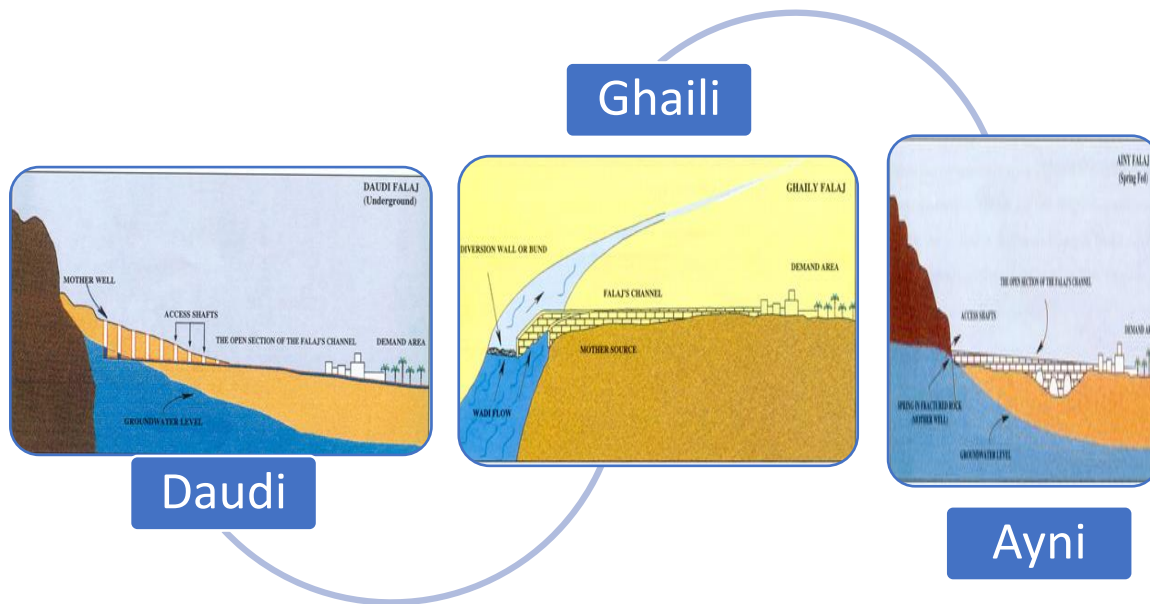


Fig. 1. Show the three *aflaj* types found in the northern part of Oman. By far, the *daudi* and the *ayni* type extract water from the upper part of the water table (aquifer) while the *ghaili* type from the surface of an oasis.

With this context, and despite the fact that in the literatures the three aflaj types differ greatly over the physical water extraction process, *ayni* and *daudi* may be viewed as falling under same category (Al-Rawas, 2000). This is attributed to the fact that both types physically extract water from upper part of the aquifer and hold single water sources (see Fig. 1). However, with respect to the maintenance and the day-to-day activities the *daudi* type is more complex. This complex physical layout can be explained by having a sophisticated construction layout with a long tunnel, extending deep into the aquifer's water table and with several branches. Therefore, one would expect strong institutional arrangement which capable to provide maintenance and to solve any shareholders disputes. In contrast, *ayni* and *ghaili* types are less complex and easier to maintain, as the *ghaili* extracts its water from the surface of an oasis and the *ayni* from a spring, both of which require short open channels to convey water to the village. The last *aflaj* census reported that there are 3017 falaj systems in Oman of which are still in operation and irrigate an area of 26,498 acres and supply annually 459 million cubic meters of water, representing 38% of the total cultivated area (MAFF, 2004; MRMWR, 2000)². It is worth noting that this particular falaj system irrigated areas (sometimes referred as demand irrigated zone) encompasses all the village boundary, locally known as *amwa'al*, which means a public community owned property because traced from very ancient, settled land. Despite the fact that Wilkinson (1977) and Zekri and Al-Marshudi (2008) provided evidences of the existing water rights ownership, they concentrated over the *daudi* type. Therefore, the subsequent lack of this information motivated the authors to explore and document a sample among three aflaj types.

A total of twelve *aflaj* were selected for the present study (see table 3). As earlier indicated that seven *aflaj* to represent the *daudi* type, three to represent the *ghaili* type and two to represent the *ayni* type. Although this selected sample appears to represent a limited number of the aflaj population, they are representative with respect to irrigated area and water volume. These located in four main areas: *Nizwa*, *Smail*, *rustaq* and *Tawwi*, all of which situated in the northern part of the country³. In addition, these areas belong to three main regions: *Dakhiliya* (the interior) hold the area of *Nizwa* and *Smail*, Southern *Al-Batinah* hold the area of *Rustaq* and *Al-Sharqyah* hold the area of *Tawwi* (Figure 2).

² Other studies indicated that *daudi* and *ayni* irrigate 20% and 10% of the area respectively while *ghaili* only irrigate 8% of the total cropped area (Zekri and Al-Marshudi, 2008).

³ Along the main sample of the five aflaj (which were included on the UNESCO heritage list in the year 2006 (MRMWM, 2008))

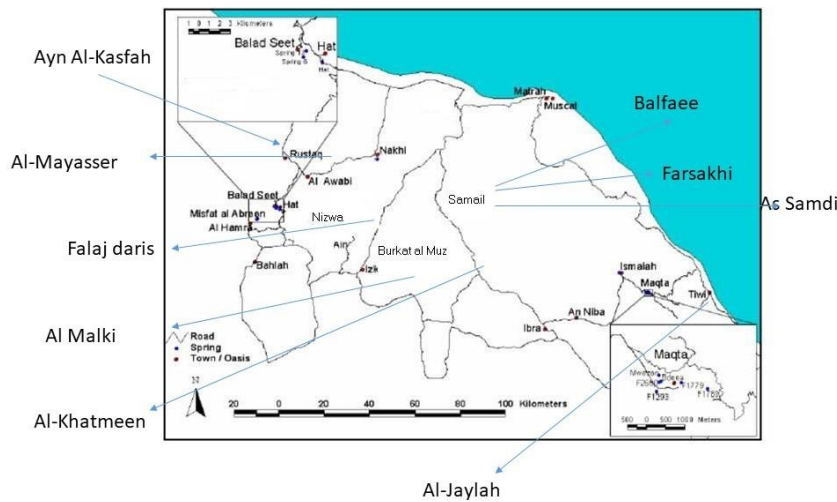


Fig. 2. The location of the selected *aflaj*

4. RESULT

Although the revealed information appeared at first sight complex (because of use of many local terms), multi-sampling framework ease the complexity and provided a thorough understanding of the existing institutional arrangements. While there are many tasks which must be accomplished to smooth and complete the overall flow circulation, three are of fundamental important. 1) management of the large scattered small private right holders 2) flow circulating mechanism in accordance the local customary irrigation codes 3) the alternative and fixed flow scheduling.

Table 1. The two identified rotational systems: *raddat* and *sharib*

Falaj name /inventory number	Location/ wilayat	Falaj type	Circulation/rotation	No. of sharib/raddat	
				abundan flow	during drought
<i>daris</i> (F0500)	Nizwa	<i>daudi</i>	<i>raddat</i>	8 <i>raddat</i>	16 <i>raddat</i>
<i>al-mayasser</i> (F1446)	Rustaq	<i>daudi</i>	<i>raddat</i>	13 <i>raddat</i>	26 <i>raddat</i>
<i>al-malki</i> (F0606)	Izki	<i>daudi</i>	<i>raddat</i>	9 <i>raddat</i>	18 <i>raddat</i>
<i>al-khatmeen</i> (F3071)	Burkat-al-mouz	<i>daudi</i>	<i>raddat</i>	9 <i>raddat</i>	9 <i>raddat</i>
<i>al hamra</i> (F0201)	AL HAMRA	<i>daudi</i>	<i>raddat</i>	8 <i>raddat</i>	16 <i>raddat</i>
<i>abu Tha'alab</i> (F1406)	Rustaq	<i>daudi</i>	<i>raddat</i>	11 <i>raddat</i>	22 <i>raddat</i>
<i>ayn al-kasfah</i> (F2750)	Rustaq	<i>ayni</i>	<i>raddat</i>	11 <i>raddat</i>	22 <i>raddat</i>
<i>as-samdi</i> (F1714)	Samail	<i>ghaili</i>	<i>sharib</i>	7 <i>sharib</i>	14 <i>sharib</i>
<i>al- mihaydith</i> (F1714)	Samail	<i>daudi</i>	<i>sharib</i>	7 <i>sharib</i>	14 <i>sharib</i>
<i>al-farsakhi</i> (<i>al-alayah</i>)	Samail	<i>ghaili</i>	<i>sharib</i>	7 <i>sharib</i>	14 <i>sharib</i>
<i>balfaee</i> (<i>asifalah</i>)	Samail	<i>ghaili</i>	<i>sharib</i>	7 <i>sharib</i>	14 <i>sharib</i>
<i>aL jaylah</i>	Sur	<i>ayni</i>	<i>sharib</i>	7 <i>sharib</i>	14 <i>sharib</i>

Table 1 shows the overall finding of the study *aflaj* sample. In column 4 of Table 4.1 the two identified rotation systems: the first known as *raddat* (singular *raddah*) (literally mean to re-schedule or turn) the second called *sharib* (literally mean to fulfil thirst). In the upper part of column 4 shows seven *aflaj* by which operated using *raddat* institutional arrangements (58 percent). These are *falaj daris* in Nizwa, *al-mayasser* in Rustaq, *al-malki* in Izki, *al-khatmeen* in burkat-al-mouz, *al-hamra* in al-hamra, *Abu Tha'alab* in Rustaq and *ayn al-khasfah* in Rustaq. Finally, in the lower part of column 4 shows the five *aflaj* which normally operated using *sharib* institutional arrangement (42 percent). These are *as-samdi*, *balfahee*, *falsaki al-mihaydith* in Samail, and *al-Jaylah* in Sur. From this overall finding, there are several principles concerning the two identified rotation systems. The first principle is the fact that they

follow a time-share interval not volume. Historically, a particular *falaj* was designed so that all shareholders would receive water at set intervals, which is the time of the complete day (24 hours) operated by either through raddat or sharib system as follow: in case of the *sharib* identified *aflaj* follow simple 7-day of the week circulation mechanism, as shown in the lower part of column 5 of Table 1, while , the *raddat* system is more complex and each *falaj* rotation (turn) differ from other depending upon each *falaj* overall flow rate.

For example, data in column 5 of Table 4 show that *falaj daris* in Nizwa normally re-scheduling over eight *raddat*. This imply that this *falaj* capable in circulating its overall flow over eight *raddat* (see below). The second principle concerned with the ability to divide each circulating days into two different parts; to distinguish between daytime and night. The main purpose of this division is to form a fair distribution among shareholders as water flow scheduled alternatively between these two time-interval (day and night), that is suppose a farmer receives his/her share at night this week then the next turn shall be re-scheduled during the daytime and so on. Several of what known as custom-time codes have been innovated for such purposes. In case of the *sharib* system, each single turn is sub-divided into several unequal parts, while *raddat* (turn) sub-divided into two equal parts: night *baddah* and day *baddah*. Nevertheless, the survey finding clearly indicated the fact that this knowledge must be understood in accordance with each *falaj* institutional arrangements. This is highly appreciated because originality of the knowledge, in our view, based upon historical Muslim scholars within Omani community.

First, they innovated and defined day and night-time in accordance with irrigation scheduling mechanism. First, within most *raddat* identified *aflaj*, there are two commonly exchangeable concepts. The first one known as *raddah*⁴ (simply means number of turns) (plural *raddat*); that is the time of the complete day (24 hours) represents a distributive *raddah* (turn). The second revealed concept known as *baddah* which provides a measuring unit of the overall flow of each *falaj*. In principle, each *baddah* hold 12 hours water circulation. This is normally attached with each *raddat* to obtain sub-divides each *raddat* into two equal parts: they say night *baddah* and day *baddah*. The third principle is concerned of how the two systems were designed to cope with problem of drought. In Oman, as an arid region, experiences periods of drought with extremely hot summer temperatures and in other years a period rainfall normally provide some sort of abundant water supply. This greatly influences the original water aquifer which supplying these *aflaj*. Hence, some years the flow in abundance and in other reduced dramatically. Since the most challenging matter in circulating *aflaj* flow is drought, the two systems were developed with a common principle/mechanism in dealing with such circumstances. When the overall flow of each *falaj* reduced dramatically, the re-scheduling cycle (either using *raddat* or *sharib*) can be easily extended say from seven days to fourteen. For example, abundant flow shown in column 5 of Table 1 expressed on time share for *raddat* and *sharib* system. In case of the *sharib* system, the seven days of the weeks simply extended to 14 *sharib*, while in case of the *raddat* is completely different. This takes different pattern with each *falaj*, for instance, for the eight *raddat* for *falaj daris* in Nizwa extended to sixteen and same explanation apply to other *falaj raddat* system.

4. DISCUSSION

Much of our knowledge with respect to above illustrated water share principles in general, using to main aspects. First, many researchers described water share principle using the term *dawarn/cycle*; they did not differentiate between the two identified systems. (Megdiche Kharrat, Ragala, & M, 2016; John Craven Wilkinson, 1977). This is attributed to the fact that they used single or several sample of one single *falaj* type. For example, in the past, Wilkinson (1977) provided details of the *aflaj* organization and water rotation based on a single sample; *falaj al-malki* in *Izki*; the same *falaj* in which this study sample was included. Megdiche Kharrat et al.,(2017; 2016) used a sample of the two most popular *duadi* type (*falaj darise* in Nizwa and *falaj al-khatmeen*); they wrote "...the underground aqueduct *falaj daris*, in Nizwa, is the largest of its type in the *Ad Dakhiliyah* governorate, followed by *falaj al-khatmeen* in a neighbor village named *Birkat Al-Mouz*" (P. 203). Another related issue is the fact that many studies did not differentiate between the *raddat* and *baddah* (Megdiche-Kharrat, Ragala, & Moussa, 2016; Zekri, Powers, & Al-Ghafri, 2014). For example, Zekri et al., wrote "...inside the *Falaj* community, the water is divided into time shares called *athars*" (P.1) In other occasion he stated "... the most common time share is the *athar*, which corresponds to approximately half an hour share per water cycle" (P.2). Megdiche-Kharrat et al., (2016) wrote "... the irrigation rotation differs from one aqueduct to another, depending mainly on the number of shares and shareholders, the agricultural land sizes,

⁴ It is considered as the main component of the distribution and allocation system known by custom as *number of raddat using plural term*, which means 'rotation over a defined period', normally a week or more.

and the flows of the water. He went on to "... each day is divided into two timings (*baddah*): a daytime *baddah* and a nighttime *baddah*" (P. 202).

5. CONCLUSION

Aflaj institutional arrangements investigation in Oman revealed special and unique form of institution based upon the fact that water rights and associated institutional arrangement must be developed and initiated over the physical overall flow water supply variation among the three *aflaj* types. In other word, since the two identified rotation systems (*raddat* and *sharib*) have reflected the original hydrological characteristics of each *falaj*, governed/control the development of water rights. This can be explained as follow: from the two illustrated construction methods (the simple and sophisticated), it is apparent according to the revealed information the fact that only *raddat* *aflaj* system, whether *daudi* or *ayni* type, linked with explicit water right ownership⁵. In other words, they are in position to provide a better secure possibility of asserting an explicit privately owned water right. Our interperion of this as follow: since the *daudi* and *ayni* types (in general) characterized by holding a high discharge rate and constant flow (high reliability), usually linked with the *raddat* system. This is attributed to the fact that these *aflaj* have been constructed with a more sophisticated physical-network components. In contrast, because the *ghaili* type characterized by seasonality and low flow, normally attached with the *sharib* system. In other word, the *ghaili* being associated with irregular flow considered as unsecure and hence the possibility to insert a privately owned right become unfeasible. Hence, they say that each shareholder has only the right to irrigate their land/garden, but not legal transaction of water rights because measuring units are not attached. In this case, during dry years a major concern is the reduction of the flow dramatically and as a result create high level of dispute among shareholders.

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Exploring Survival Strategies and Family Role in Micro-Family Food Business: Piloting for Interviews in Qualitative Research

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Abstract

A range of philosophical perspectives, techniques, and comprehensions are gleaned from the viewpoints of the participants in qualitative research. Understanding how people view their experiences and actions is a significant purpose. However, it could be challenging for a novice researcher to carry out the interview with a qualitative approach. Particularly in qualitative research, where it highlights the changes to the major study, the pilot study was a crucial component in assessing the viability and evaluation of the study. The significance of pilot studies, the techniques used, and the lessons acquired during the process are all described in this article. The pilot interview was conducted with two owners of the micro-family food businesses (MFFB), as preparation for a thesis in developing the research instruments further an in-depth understanding of the challenges, adaptation and the family role influences in family food business amid COVID-19 post-pandemic in Klang Valley, Selangor, Malaysia. In addition to demonstrating the benefits of pilot studies, this paper also discusses the changes that were made to the main research as a result of the pilot test. These account for the interview guide's adjustment, specifically the interview questions.

Keywords: Interview, food business, pilot study, qualitative, survival strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

In qualitative research, the researcher and the issue being studied have a close relationship that informs both the topic choice and the research methodology (Aziz & Khan, 2020). According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research consists of six commonly used approaches in conducting qualitative research: (1) basic qualitative research, (2) phenomenology, (3) grounded theory, (4) ethnography, (5) narrative analysis, and (6) critical qualitative research. "Qualitative interviewing" is described by Mason (2002) as "in-depth, semi-structured or loosely organised modes of interviewing." This method of interview calls for a variety of open-ended questions pertaining to the study's goals as well as follow-up inquiries to clarify the interviewees' words and the concepts they expressed during the interview (Hancock et al., 2007; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

To collect all the data on the survival tactics used by micro-family food businesses in order to change the direction of their businesses, this study will employ a fundamental qualitative research approach. Individuals construct reality through their interactions with their social environments, according to this core and interpretive study. Additionally, it will be fascinating to scholars who wish to learn more about how people construct their worldviews, interpret their experiences, and assess their significance. According to Kaushal and Srivastava (2021), qualitative research using interviews is particularly suitable for this study since it may extract participants' perspectives from them in significant detail than the quantitative method.

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The benefit of conducting an interview is that the researcher can explicitly explain the study's goal and the forms of data needed (Amran et al., 2021). The researcher must understand that the goal of a qualitative interview is not to elicit answers from the informant. Instead, the goal is to examine the participants' statements so that the researcher can better grasp how their experiences played out and the meanings they attached to them (Roberts, 2020). Due to the small number of participants, it could be difficult for a novice researcher to conduct the interview qualitatively.

Besides, managing context information, testing and improving data gathering, and analysis methods are both done through the use of pilot studies (Janghorban et al., 2014). According to Crossman (2019), a pilot study is a technique used to develop or hone a research question, determine the most effective ways to pursue it, and determine how much time and money will be needed to finish the more extensive version, among other things. A feasibility study, which is a scaled-down version of the intended study to evaluate the data gathering tools, is comparable to a pilot study (Aziz & Khan, 2020). The major objectives of the pilot study were 1) to identify the methodological problems that would need to be resolved in order to improve the main study, and 2) to clarify the adjustments made to the relevant parts of the main study.

Majid et al. (2017) described the purpose of the pilot study is to assess whether the research questions are pertinent and to provide the researcher with some initial guidance on the project's viability. Although a pilot study is frequently used in quantitative studies as a tool to evaluate the reliability and validity of a research instrument, its significance has been extended to qualitative research design (Majid et al., 2017). This might aid the researcher in identifying any flaws or restrictions in the study (Kim How et al., 2022). Therefore, based on this input and the results of the "practise interview," the initial changes can be made before the major study is undertaken (Roberts, 2020).

According to Morse et al. (2002), conducting field tests or obtaining expert opinions will aid researchers in establishing content validity in addition to allowing comments to be made regarding the questionnaire's format. Additionally, it permits researchers to make required adjustments based on the pilot testing with a group that is as comparable to the final population in their sample as possible (Saunders et al., 2007). It is a crucial component since it aids in identifying interview design problems and limitations so that necessary adjustments can be made before the main study is carried out (Aziz & Khan, 2020). Moreover, this offers inexperienced researchers the chance to improve their interviewing abilities (Roberts, 2020). The pilot project will help nascent researchers get ready for the interview process, encourage them to keep an open mind and enhance the efficiency of the tools that are utilised when conducting qualitative interviews.

Saunders et al., (2007) highlighted that the size of the research project, time and financial resources available, design of the questionnaire, research question and objectives, and a number of people with whom the researchers pilot their questionnaire will all influence how many tests are carried out. In addition, other authors, including Seidman (2006), Kim (2010) and Ismail et al. (2018) described the acceptable range for the sample size of the pilot study, which can range from two to five participants, depending on the difficulty of the subject under investigation, the level of expertise, the researcher's time and resources. Hurn and Tomalin (2013) suggested that an informal meeting with research participants can assist build rapport and ease tension. As a result, the researchers conducted the pilot study with two informants.

1.1 Background of the study

Any unexpected crisis could jeopardise the viability of the local business units, which are frequently quite vulnerable to crises (Marjanski & Sukowski, 2021). Small business owners generally put their survival above long-term expansion. Furthermore, according to Piramanayagam et al. (2022), micro-enterprises commonly encounter diminishing demand, financial loss, high employee turnover and insufficient cash flow, an inability to meet contractual obligations, and even closure during times of crisis. But the continued pandemic has created a clear existential problem for small businesses (Toanoglou et al., 2021). As a result of COVID-19, owners of micro-family food businesses (MFFBs) must consider how to improve their operations for long-term economic viability. On the other hand, the research's goal is to learn more about the family's influences on business operations. By using this unique opportunity to look into how family roles work, specifically in Malaysia, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on family businesses.

In order to determine the crisis survival methods, the current study is evaluated based on the effects of COVID-19, especially on the small food enterprise (Majid et al., 2022). The current study, part of an ongoing thesis exploring business survival strategies and the role of the family in the micro-family food business amid the COVID-19 post-pandemic in Klang Valley, Selangor, was done in the early stages of the qualitative phase.

2. METHODS

This paper outlines the methods utilised to help the researcher collect the data necessary to meet the goals of the study. Figure 1 describes the process adapted from a previous study by Majid et al. (2017). Each step is described in detail to aid the researcher in developing a good interview guide for the primary study.

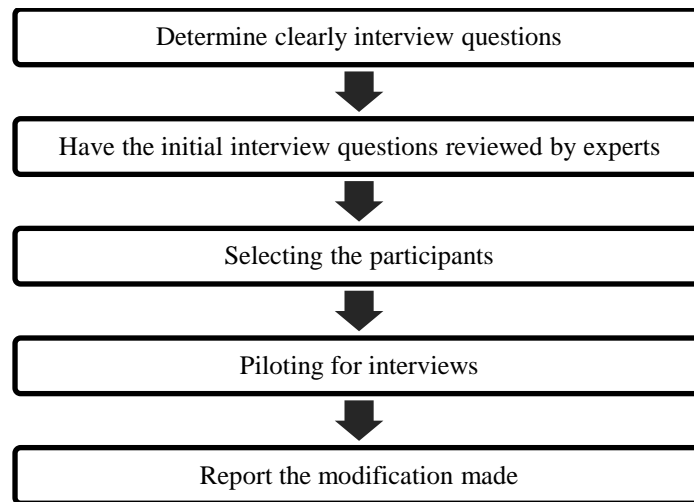


Fig. 1. Steps in conducting the pilot study.

Step 1: Determine clearly interview questions

The researcher first prepared open-ended questions about business strategy, business survival, survival strategy, financial challenges, technological adoption, and innovation that acted as a guide for the interview. Essentially, the researcher focused on ensuring that the interview questions were designed to answer the study topic. For the major query of this paper, the main question was: “What business strategies have you implemented for your business to grow and survive?” This process can improve interview questions and guarantee their significance in attaining the study's goal (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Check to see if the researcher has asked the right measurement-related questions (Dikko, 2016). The interview process includes the open-ended questions, which were then sent via email to the experts for clearance.

Step 2: Have the initial questions reviewed by experts

The focus of the second step is to have experts review the questionnaire. Depending on the intricacy of the topic under inquiry, level of knowledge, time, and resources available to the researcher, the number of reviewers can range from two to five or even more (Aziz & Khan, 2020). Two experts in the food business industry were consulted by the researcher. The members of the supervisory committee then reviewed the interview questions to make sure the language and wording were appropriate. The ten primary questions were explored in the pilot study after the preliminary evaluations, and the researcher used probing questions to extract the participants' viewpoints that required further explanation (Majid et al., 2017).

Step 3: Selecting the participants

Permission is requested to enlist the owners of a micro-family-run restaurant in Selangor, Malaysia, particularly in the Klang Valley regions, during the participant selection phase. A formal letter was submitted to the organization's representative staff, and approval was obtained. The researcher suggested that participants in pilot interviews should possess as many characteristics as the group that will take part in the main study. The owners of MFFB were located once the researcher had previously provided the inclusion criteria for participants through suggestions from the pertinent organisation. It showed that the participants were selected based on their cooperation and the purposive sampling outcomes (Majid et al., 2017).

The researcher has personally met with each of the potential participants to introduce himself and briefly discuss the purposes of the study. The participants were given the consent letter to address the concerns of voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality, the participants' rights to opt-out of the data collection process, and audio recording. The participants were informed that they were used as a sample for the pilot study and that the

main study's suggested strategy would be guided by their involvement (Aziz & Khan, 2020). The researcher attempted to conduct interviews with two male MFFB business owners. Table 1 lists the participant's demographic information.

Table 1. Participants.

	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Food Business	Family relation	Business experience
1	Man	54	Male	Chicken rice	Husband-wife	18 years
2	Salamon	55	Male	Tempeh production	Father-son	20 years

Step 4: Piloting for interviews

The pilot study was carried out in the fourth stage. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) advise using a setting that provides the maximum level of comfort to the participants of the inquiry when using an interview as a research instrument, particularly face-to-face interviews. Due to this, the participants were free to select the interview location of their preferences (Aziz & Khan, 2020). As a result, interviews proceeded at the proprietor's MFFB facility. The researcher will obtain the consent of both informants and provide letters of informed consent to each participant. The interview should not go longer than 90 minutes to allow for the participants' other commitments (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

The researcher will also find it simpler to establish a rapport with the participants and gain experience conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews owing to the pilot study. A notable advantage of the pilot study was that it helped the researcher improve their interviewing methods and conversational fluency. At the end of the session, the researcher will ask the participants for their preferred aliases.

Step 5: Report modification made

The final stage is modification. When the pilot study is concluded, researchers will have the opportunity to manage and code the data, verbatim transcript it, and analyse it. Researchers that have experience with transcribing and data administration will be able to summarise transcripts and recognise codes (Majid et al., 2017). The researcher will be able to make adjustments after the pilot trial. Moreover, the preliminary interviews resulted in the rewording of previously closed or ambiguous questions (Wheaton, 2021).

Unquestionably, the importance of the pilot study enabled the researcher to improve techniques before starting the main study phase. The pilot research led to several modifications being made. First, the researcher realised after the initial interview that the interview questions needed to be improved. Prior to making some revisions, the questionnaire did not ask about the impact of family involvement in the firm. As a result, the interview framework was expanded to include the extra three essential questions in order to improve the quality of the data and the depth of the participants' responses. Ten open-ended questions would be included as a result, increasing the interview questions' usefulness in gaining insight into the participants' actual experiences for the main study.

Next, the researcher identified that the selection criteria of participants should be extended more clearly. The MFFB can be in a wide range of food businesses such as grocery stores, food stalls and restaurants. After the pilot study, the researcher found that the MFFB from restaurants or cafés is highly affected and struggled to maintain their business even after the pandemic. This is because they not just have to pay for the rent, but also employees' wages, as highlighted by Man. He was saying, "... at the beginning stage of the pandemic, it is quite difficult for us. There are not many sales as we hoped for. The orders were decreased, and I have to lower my staffs' salaries." Meaning that, adding the criteria of participants who run a restaurant or café would help the researcher to put insights into the business strategy and survival done by the MFFB owners which relate to this study's focus. Therefore, the researcher chose to include this specific rationale as one of the selection criteria of participants for the primary study to ensure that the MFFB setting remains aligned and comparable throughout the data collection.

Parenthetically, although the interview guide's questions were non-directional, the researcher discovered that non-leading question intonation, question closure, and paraphrasing of interview responses were necessary throughout the actual interview process. This was evident during the pilot interview when the participants fell silent, indicating that they needed some time to reflect on the question and to gather their recollections of the occurrence. Researchers must have effective interviewing techniques using both indirect and direct probes, according to Aziz and Khan (2020). Thus, taking field notes and recordings audio would aid a novice researcher in gaining a greater grasp and deeper understanding of the phenomenon while also serving as an early type of data analysis.

3. DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study is to demonstrate a pilot study for an interview in a qualitative research approach on the MFFB owners in the Klang Valley area. The current study extends the understanding of the business survival and strategies employed by the two micro-family food business owners. The results show that food quality and service quality is the main priority of a business strategy. As mentioned by Man in the interview, "... I learn and practice how to prepare the dish to meet the customers' taste. And, I believe that being generous to the customers and good supervision to the staff will assure my business to sustain." Previous studies also highlighted that the attitudes of the employees will cause affections to the quality of the services (Norazha et al., 2022) and it is crucial in producing the healthiest and best-tasting food for consumers (Liu et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Salamon also pointed out that business experiences are the key to business survival. He said, "... I have been in the food business for quite a long time. So, I was thinking, what if we produce something that can cater for people during the movement control order (MCO)? This is because I saw the opportunity to provide something which is in demand, yet not been done by others." Thus, these aspects show that family food business owners especially the micro-enterprises should therefore adjust and improve their food quality, and service quality and being highly experienced in business is crucial for them.

Besides, the findings suggested that shifting business nature from business-to-customer (B2C) to business-to-business (B2B) is a lot to take in for the MFFB survival strategy. Salamon highlighted as "... at this age, I would rather say that I prefer this type of business than before. I have supplied the tempeh in bulk to the retail stores and supermarket, and they will sell my products to the market." Likewise, the adaptation of using third-party food delivery such as Foodpanda and GrabFood is a great decision by made the MFFB owner during and after the MCO. Man quoted, "... since we cannot open for dine-in, the food delivery really helps to increase the sales. Plus, the customer can choose from a variety of menus in the food delivery apps." According to Chetty et al. (2020), business owners should upgrade their advertisement through online applications as online purchasing including food ordering is still rising in demand since the COVID-19. This study provides strong evidence to support the notion that innovation should be implemented by the MFFB owners in order to make sure their business stays afloat and sustain. Apart from that, family members play an important role in this micro-family food business. However, the participant pointed out that it is difficult for them as a parent and restaurant owners to manage the business when it comes to their own children. Therefore, they have to hire employees who are not family-related to help them run the business. Relevant studies on this discussion produced conflicting results regarding the working environment and organisational culture of family businesses, where family businesses exist as a result of the mutually beneficial economic and non-economic value that is produced when family and business systems are combined (Camilleri & Valeri, 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

The limited sample size of this pilot study means that data saturation was not achieved, which is a limitation. Small-scale pilot research was conducted to evaluate the data collection tools, look for any methodological problems associated with future improvement, and make necessary revisions for the main study. Even if qualitative studies only involve a small number of interviews, pilot testing of the questionnaire is still crucial. Interview piloting is an important and efficient step in conducting qualitative research since it shows how the main study may be improved. Upon reflection, the pilot interviews improved the deductive coding technique used in the theme analysis and served to retain the study's credibility by strengthening the research instrument and research focus. As the pilot study aided researchers in determining the viability and evaluation of their planned major study, particularly in qualitative research, there is hope that this article may offer some assistance for additional qualitative research in the relevant context.

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“It is too precious to be wasted!” Counterfeit branded fashion goods for everyday consumption

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Abstract

Due to the plethora of counterfeit goods in the physical and virtual marketplace, the plummeting demand for genuine fashion goods led to social and economic problems in the fashion goods industry. These dark markets pose the most critical challenge for luxury brand manufacturers in discouraging consumers from participating in counterfeiting activities. Based on a hermeneutic phenomenology study, this research attempted to examine an exhaustive and contextualised account of 12 consumers consumption experiences on the purchase of counterfeit branded fashion goods through in-depth interviews. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, and two themes emerged from this study; special occasions and prized collection. It validated that consumer refused to detach from the brand and purchased counterfeit branded fashion goods due to the intense attachment with the desired brand. It enables them to connect to the brand daily, which echoed profane consumption. The data confirmed how consumers treat the original branded fashion goods as sacred objects, even though the value should be preserved, and their involvement in counterfeit consumption was merely to protect those original branded fashion goods. This analysis adds knowledge to counterfeit branded fashion goods and consumer behaviour as the emerging themes depicted the actual experiences captured from the consumers who continuously involved in counterfeit consumption practice.

Keywords: Counterfeit goods, brand love, phenomenology, fashion goods

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of counterfeit market creates asymmetrical effects on the social hierarchy, which can lead to unequal judgments and perceptions of the social classes as consumers discriminate ‘out-group’ members (Amaral & Loken, 2016). This biased judgment, nonetheless, is manipulated by ‘in-group members’ to ‘secretly’ participate in counterfeit consumption, so as to ‘camouflage’ their self-identity before other in-group members (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016). Equipped with extensive knowledge regarding counterfeit market and goods, consumers can select the best quality of counterfeit luxury fashion goods to showcase their desired self-image and identity (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Bian et al., 2016; Peng et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2010; Pueschel et al., 2016; Thaichon & Quach, 2016). Hence, ‘blending’ the usage of original luxury brand and counterfeit version enables these ‘in-group’ members to protect their self-image and social position from being caught by other social group members.

Despite the adverse effects discussed above, the aspirational effect does influence counterfeit consumers to purchase original luxury brand (Bekir et al., 2013). The existence of counterfeit goods serves as a “gateway” product that enables consumers to minimise financial risks before deciding to purchase original luxury brand (Ahuvia et al., 2013; Key et al., 2013). The literature depicts that counterfeit goods are meant for low- and middle-income groups or social class consumers (Augusto de Matos et al., 2007; Zaichkowsky, 2000). However, the perceived value dimension (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2017) also attracts high-income and high-social class consumers to indulge in this unethical consumption (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Pueschel et al., 2016). Eisend et al.,

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(2017) asserted that demographic characteristics do not affect consumer's attitudes, intention, or behaviour on counterfeit brand products, thus reflecting that counterfeit market is not meant for those unaffordable only.

Studies on counterfeit goods purchase in Malaysia have revealed value consciousness is one of the key factors that promote consumers' attitudes and purchase intention in counterfeit consumption (Ting et al., 2016). This notion is in line with another study that found perceived values borne by counterfeit goods were more important during economic hardship (Mohd Nordin et al., 2013). Malaysian consumers have been exposed to the attitude of looking for bargains in spending every single cent of their money. In order to satisfy their material needs, consumers tend to imitate the lifestyle of others by purchasing counterfeit goods (Mohd Nordin et al., 2013). The literature depicts that Millennial consumer are heavy users of luxury fashion products that are frequently counterfeited (The Boston Consulting Group-Altgamma, 2017) and aimed by counterfeiters due to their low income (Chakraborty et al., 1996; Cordell et al., 1996; H. Kim & Karpova, 2010; Marcketti & Shelley, 2009; Wilcox et al., 2009; Yoo & Lee, 2012). As consumers become reliant on the visible cues reflected by luxury brand, counterfeit versions are the best option for these young adult consumers who face financial constraints to emulate their desired social status (Teah & Phau, 2009; Hashim et al., 2018) and to keep up with fashion.

In precise, the involvement of consumers in counterfeit consumption is classified into deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeit purchase (Grossman & Shapiro, 1998). Deceptive counterfeit purchase occurs when consumers lack knowledge and information to distinguish counterfeit from original goods (Gino et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2018). On the contrary, non-deceptive counterfeit purchase reflects consumers equipped with sufficient knowledge and the ability to detect cues that indicate the counterfeit nature of the goods (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007; Sharma & Chan, 2011; Zampetakis, 2014). Malaysia is recognised as a shopping heaven for "bargain hunters" who seek affordable branded luxury goods that can be easily accessed from unregulated outlets, registered stores, and online platforms (The Malaysian Reserve, 2020).

To date, fashion goods manufacturers rely on the creation of branding strategies with a message that emphasises on the symbolic values of possessing luxury goods. Unfortunately, this has generated aspirational effects that lead to product substitution (Amaral & Loken, 2016; Bekir et al., 2013), hence the misconception of the meaning by consumers of counterfeit products. Apparently, consumers involved in counterfeit consumption not only seek extrinsic values as reported in past studies (Phau & Teah, 2009; Staake et al., 2009; Ting et al., 2016), but also look for hedonic and intrinsic values, such as self-competency and pleasure (Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013; Pueschel et al., 2016). Therefore, it is integral to inform consumers that the values sought from counterfeit consumption exert adverse implications to the society and the country. This message is more effective to hinder the escalating demand from Malaysian consumers for counterfeit goods and to prevent any adverse effect on the national economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The substitution effects dilute the values of genuine luxury brands as consumers start losing faith in the "magical" power of the brand that is supposed to enhance their social class and status (Wilcox et al., 2009). As a result, consumers try to disassociate themselves from brands that are counterfeited and avoid purchasing those brands. Hence, luxury brand manufacturers struggle to protect the brand exclusivity and expect their loyal customers to stand together to combat the aggressive counterfeiter (Cesareo & Stöttinger, 2015; Loi et al., 2015). Instead of moving away from the brand, "real" consumers with strong internal needs, without hesitation, would keep displaying their "real" love and loyalty towards the brand (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2018; Yoo & Lee, 2012) as counterfeit versions turn more inferior (Bian & Moutinho, 2011b; Yoo & Lee, 2012; Zaichkowsky, 2000).

As depicted in the literature, value consciousness has been identified as an influential factor that motivates consumers to purchase counterfeit goods as they are concerned about paying low prices, subject to some quality constraint (Eisend & Schuchert-güler, 2006; Phau et al., 2013; Phau & Teah, 2009; Staake et al., 2009; Teah et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2009). Hence, the price has a greater influence on consumer purchase (Batra, 2012; Cui & Liu, 2001), describing consumers as very price-sensitive, as the satisfaction coming from the low price that they paid for the desired branded fashion goods without sacrificing plenty of money. Similarly, Quintanilla et al., (2010) discovered that counterfeit consumers defined themselves as efficient in optimising their resources and that utilising the counterfeit market as a good decision which is "more worthwhile" spending money on an identical copied of branded fashion goods. Thus, the "affordability" issue made consumers realise their money's worth which enable them to own more branded fashion goods collection. Prior studies noted that consumers involved in non-deceptive counterfeit were aware of the inferior quality of counterfeit goods and admitted that the quality was incomparable to the original brand (Amaral & Loken, 2016b; Large, 2014; Nik Hashim et al., 2018; Zaichkowsky, 2000). Instead of being concerned about the inferior functional quality, counterfeit luxury brand

provides these consumers the opportunity to satiate their craving for wearing branded fashion goods at a low price, in which they could not afford to obtain them previously (Phau & Teah, 2009; Priporas et al., 2015; Swami et al., 2009; Teah et al., 2015).

Thaichon and Quach (2016) also reported that the consumers were fully aware of the functional flaws of the counterfeit version, but resolved them with the excellent quality of product appearance (Pope et al., 2020). Thus, the consumers were indeed concerned about the replication quality of the exterior characteristics, which enabled them to reduce their financial and psychosocial risks. As depicted in the literature, the factors that influence consumers attitudes and purchase intention on counterfeit goods are psychosocial risks that expose them to social embarrassment if they are caught by others purchasing or wearing the counterfeit goods (Amaral & Loken, 2016b; Y. Chen et al., 2014; Pueschel et al., 2016). However, extensive consumer involvement in searching for information on counterfeit goods leads to knowledge and skill enhancement, thus enabling them to select the best quality of counterfeit goods (Xuemei Bian et al., 2016; Key et al., 2013; Nik Hashim et al., 2018; Sharma & Chan, 2016b; Thaichon & Quach, 2016), and reducing those psychosocial risks. Indeed, consumers discovered that they received expected value, which is the high similarity of exterior characteristics of counterfeit goods from the money they had spent; signifying that the informants were satisfied with their ability to wear the desired branded fashion goods.

The literature depicts, despite being highly value-conscious and price-sensitive, young consumers display very strong attachment and connection to a brand (Ismail et al., 2020). Additionally, these group of consumers seek quality products and prefer global brands to local ones (Tjiptono et al., 2020), have a strong desire to show off high-class and hedonic lifestyle, as well as prefer affordable prices (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019; Truong et al., 2010b). Hence, the need to conform to fashion and stay “in-vogue” before others with minimal amount of investment (Gentry et al., 2006) help counterfeit consumers to emulate their desired lifestyle. The counterfeit market enabled the price-sensitive informants to stay connected to a brand at an affordable price that gave good value for money. Unlike purchasing the original branded fashion goods, consumers involved in counterfeit consumption found that the price-quality relationship of counterfeit products is regarded as offering good value for their money, instead of high functional quality and performance of the goods. Prior literature claims that luxury brand consumers tend to buy counterfeit brands to safeguard their popularity and attractiveness since they face scarce financial resources (Fastoso et al., 2018; Priporas et al., 2015). Financial limitation is a form of resource scarcity defined as the real or perceived lack of various forms of capital (i.e., financial, social, cultural) or other production inputs (i.e., time) that the consumer invests in order to acquire and use goods/services (Hamilton et al., 2019).

The literature asserts that consumers’ attitudes and behaviour are strongly influenced by a brand as they are emotionally attached to a brand (Batra et al., 2012; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). The existing cognition, belief, as well as evaluation of high price and quality of original branded fashion goods, portray a high brand image that symbolises meaning to consumers (Cho & Fiore, 2015; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019; Turunen & Leipämaa-leskinen, 2015). Belk et al., (1989) pointed out material object that infuses a special meaning to an individual will be set apart from everyday usage, which is also known as profane consumption (Loro, 2006), thus, signifies how consumers develop a deeper relationship with the object.

The consumers ascribed counterfeit consumption as an opportunity to keep up with the fashion and trend, apart from serving as a tool to protect the value of the original branded fashion goods. Given how the consumers conjured up the meaning of counterfeit consumption as a platform to satiate their cravings on using the desired branded fashion goods, the psychological connection they made with counterfeit consumption had little to do with inferior or low-quality image and quality performance. People may choose to change their attitudes, behaviour or beliefs to reduce dissonance, so as to enable them to “excuse” their contradictory behaviour to compensate their own feelings and resolve any discomfort feeling (Jeong et al., 2019; A. McGrath, 2017). By exploring the meaning of counterfeit consumption through the phenomenology studies, consumers in this study revealed how they resolved the uncomfortable psychological state when purchasing and using counterfeit branded fashion goods.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

Given the exploratory nature of the study, phenomenology is applied to understand the meaning behind consumer involvement in counterfeit consumption behaviour. Phenomenology provides more insights from the actual consumers’ real-life experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and thus able to explain the increasing demand for

counterfeit goods from the consumers' continuous involvement. A semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted to allow the informants to talk freely, which "directed towards understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences as expressed in their words" and statements that infuse meaning (Seale & Silverman, 1997).

The researchers adopted a purposive and snowballing sampling strategy, and in total, including twelve in-depth interviews with six male and six female participants. The researchers classified them as young adult consumers ranging from 20 to 33 years old. There were pre-selected criteria for choosing and selecting the informants. The informants should at least have a two years' experience purchasing and using counterfeit fashion goods, i.e., actively purchasing, owning, and using counterfeit goods for the past six months. This criterion is imperative in defining consumer involvement (Freedman, 1964) as it describes consumers' concern about, interest in or commitment to a particular position on counterfeit consumption. The informants chosen in this research were consumers who purchased counterfeit branded fashion goods, such as handbags, sunglasses, apparel, watches, purses, scarves, telekung (female Muslims prayer attire), shoes, slippers, and sandals. The researchers identified that these fashion goods categories had been the most frequently counterfeited in the literature. As for female scarves (hijab) and telekung, the researchers recognised brands such as Naelofar, Bawal Exclusive, Duck scarves, and Siti Khadijah as among the famous Muslim brands which have been counterfeited and sold widely in Malaysia (Berita Harian, 2016; Harian Metro, 2018; Malaysia Gazette, 2019; New Straits Times, 2018). The researchers audiotaped each in-depth interview and lasted from 30 to 90 minutes. Demographic data are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic data of informants

Informants	Occupation	Years of consumption experiences
Informant 1, 22 years, Male	University Student	7 years
Informant 2, 28 years, Female	Executive	8 years
Informant 3, 20 years, Male	Sales promoter	3 years
Informant 4, 33 years, Female	Entrepreneur	10 years
Informant 5, 22 years, Female	Administrator	4 years
Informant 6, 33 years, Female	Government Officer	2 years
Informant 7, 22 years, Female	University Student	2 years
Informant 8, 33 years, Male	Government Officer	15 years
Informant 9, 20 years, Male	University Student	5 years
Informant 10, 22 years, Male	University Student	5 years
Informant 11, 22 years, Female	University Student	2 years
Informant 12, 22 years, Male	University Student	5 years

3.2 Data collection, analysis and ethical considerations

The researchers collected data in six months between May 2018 and October 2018 and conducted the interviews at the informants' chosen locations. During the interview session, the researchers familiarised themselves with some terms, which the constructed meaning derived from the cultural values, such as "grade," "premium," "high-grade," and "copy-ori", which denoted counterfeit branded fashion goods. As this study explored the meaning of consumption experiences, the informants could express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with both genuine and counterfeit fashion goods. It helped the researchers gain more insights into understanding the underlying motives of continuous consumer involvement in this counterfeit consumption. Although 12 informants were interviewed, 4 interviews stood out as their consumption experiences in counterfeit goods revealed a new emerging theme testifying their love to the original fashion brands. Their consumption experiences were compelling and their experiences capture divergent points on a continuum of counterfeit goods purchase, thus, can help delineate the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An in-depth presentation of these four informants' contrary experiences and interpretations contribute to the meaning of counterfeit branded fashion goods consumption at an individual level.

In this research, the researchers performed thematic analysis as it offers a way of recognising and tapping the underlying themes in a given dataset, flexible enough to be modified for the needs of many studies, and non-intricate, besides providing rich and detailed data (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Due to the bilingual nature of Malaysian speakers, no software automatically transcribed the mixture of recorded English and Malay conversations practised by the informants. Thus, the researchers transcribed it manually due to the constraints. Since the study aimed to discover the meaning from the actual consumer experience, the researchers analysed the statements to capture the sense. The researchers recorded all interview sessions and wrote them to generate interpretations via a hermeneutic circle during the data collection process. The step intended to comprehend and interpret the phenomenon based on the consumers' shared knowledge and experience.

To allow for a holistic perspective, the three researchers discussed all emerging themes. The interchange and discussion of interpretations helped the researchers define and redefine the direction of analysis. The researchers examined the categorisation of data and comparisons between the informant's reports to identify the main themes and subthemes.

The researchers briefed all the informants about the purpose of the interview and their position in this investigation. As for 'consent and ethics approval', the researchers obtained a written consent form to proceed with the study from each participant voluntarily. All the informants have been informed their rights and interests were essential when reporting and distributing the data. The researchers kept the name and other personal details of the informants confidential. In an attempt to protect the identity of the participants, the researchers applied pseudonyms. The researchers securely stored all related records and data, and nobody other than the researchers could access them. They archived documents in a secure room, keeping them for three or seven years after completion.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Two main themes emerged related to the consumer's involvement in counterfeit fashion goods; special occasion and prized collection reflected how the consumers protected their original belonging from any potential spoilage as they felt that the original version was sacred and had symbolic values in their lives.

Theme 1: Special Occasion

This theme described how the informants indicated a strong sense of attachment to original branded fashion goods. Therefore, they were motivated to find alternative goods in protecting the value of the branded fashion goods, which was meaningful to them. The informants believed that the counterfeit version served as a protection tool of the original version; thus, sustaining their involvement in counterfeit consumption.

Informant 9 is a male and 20 years of age, a university student that love to purchase and wear Vans shoes, adidas tracksuits and G-shock watch. He revealed his bitter experience when he used his original Vans shoes during a workshop at the university. He described a feeling of frustration as he always tripped on the machines with his original Vans' shoes, which eventually damaged the appearance of his shoes. As he frequently spent his time at the workshop and worked with a machine, he realised that wearing his original Vans' shoes would ruin the condition of his shoes, thus the feeling of regret for he was unable to protect his shoes. As a result, he wore the copied version of Vans's shoes to the university. He kept his original Vans' shoes at home and wore them occasionally for leisure activity. Hence, he bought three pairs of copied Vans' shoes throughout his three-year study period at the university merely to replace his original Vans' shoes when attending classes.

"I bought both the original and first copy shoes. For daily use, such as going to the class and workshop, I preferred wearing the first copy one. Due to safety reason in the workshop, I would wear the first copy version. There was an incident when I accidentally kicked a machine in the workshop. I felt that it was a waste to wear original shoes because I love them. So, I wore three first copy Vans shoes while studying for 3 years at the university. I had three first copy Vans and one original Vans. I keep the original pair at home and wore it for leisure activities. I love my original shoes and I felt that it would be a waste to wear them daily." (Informant 9)

Informant 3 is a male and 20 years of age, a sales promoter that love to purchase and collect brands such as Adidas, Supremes, Places Plus Faces, Vans shoes, bags and apparel. He pointed out a feeling of regretful when he wore original fashion goods for daily usage. The original fashion goods were too valuable for him to be worn for daily

consumption. Hence, he kept his costly goods in the closet and boxes to preserve their value, instead of wearing them to workplace. For him, the decision to purchase and wear both original and counterfeit versions was determined by the types of usage, occasion, and with whom he hanged out together. As for the original version, he preferred wearing them during special occasions, such as wedding, holidays, and hanging out with friends. Meanwhile, the counterfeit version that dismisses much protection and care, was worn for daily usage, such as to work.

“As for me, I bought first copy products because if I wear the original ones for daily usage, such as going to work, it would be wasted. Am I right? I prefer keeping the original ones in the closet and box, besides wearing them while hanging out with friends, shopping, and holiday. I used the first copy goods depending on usage, such as bag, shoes, and shirts for daily usage and for work. If I’m going to a wedding and or any special event, I would wear the original one. If I wear my original shoes to work by bike on daily basis, they will be damaged if it rains. Therefore, it is better to wear the first copy version to work.” (Informant 3)

Informant 7 is a female and 22 years of age, a university student that frequently purchase Naelofar hijab, Guess and Michael Kors handbag and purse. She felt that it was better to wear the copied version of Naelofar hijab (Muslim women scarf) to class daily, although she agreed with others that it was better to purchase the original version as it is more long-lasting. She noted that wearing the original hijab was only worthwhile for special events, such as going out with someone special. She added that something expensive should be worn only for special occasion.

“I do not mind because we are not wearing the original one every day. I wear the original scarf if there is an event or when I go out. If I am going to the class, I would wear the first copy version. If I have to attend a special occasion, such as a special date, I will use the original one. It depends on the situation. If one wants to use the product for long term, it would be better to buy the original version. It is true. As for me, the copied version is sufficient for daily usage. If we wear the original one for a special event, we will be motivated to dress up more attractively. As for the copy goods, they are suitable for daily usage. It is not worthy to wear the original one for everyday usage.” (Informant 7)

Theme 2: Prized Collection

This theme the need to protect the value of his original branded fashion goods and decided to keep them as precious collection. Based on the Cambridge dictionary, prized is defined as something valuable and important. Informant 8 is a male, 33 years of age, a government officer that love to collect Adidas, Fila, Levis, Marvel apparels, wallet, watches and slippers. He believed that his original T-shirt is precious and important to his life, thus decided not to wear it as he felt that it was important to protect such prized item. However, since he had still wanted to wear branded items to keep up with the trends; he purchased the copied version of the desired T-shirt to be worn. The informant felt that he was protecting the value of the original T-shirt. He believed that keeping the original version in good condition was a smart investment for future, and wearing the copied one enabled him to keep up with the latest trends:

“Since I kept a lot of original t-shirts and framed them, my wife was curious about my intention and asked me about it. I also bought the same T-shirt in the first copy version. I told my wife that the one in the frame was original, and the one that I wear was the first copy version. I believe that the price of the original goods will increase in future. I have both the original ones for my personal collection and the first copy ones to wear.” (Informant 8)

Apparently, Informant 8 was willing to spend some extra cash on both versions as he found that the counterfeit market gave him a platform to pursue his hobbies and interest. He believed that by keeping the original version in a “special place” was a smart action to preserve the value of his original T-shirt. Simultaneously, he purchased the counterfeit T-shirt to replace the original one as profane usage. He believed that both versions are important to his life in fulfilling his material needs and desire.

Indeed, both themes portrayed the consumers' concern about taking precautionary steps to protect their original branded fashion goods through counterfeit consumption as they refused to detach from the aspired brand in their daily consumption. Counterfeit consumption enabled them to preserve the value of the original branded fashion goods by performing dual consumption; counterfeit for profane usage and original for sacred usage. The themes

indicate that the consumers had intense feelings towards the branded fashion goods, as they pointed out the original ones deserve to be treated with reverence. The literature asserts that consumers' attitudes and behaviour are strongly influenced by a brand as they are emotionally attached to a brand (Batra et al., 2012; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). The existing cognition, belief, as well as evaluation of high price and quality of original branded fashion goods, portray a high brand image that symbolises meaning to consumers (Cho & Fiore, 2015; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019; Turunen & Leipämaa-leskinen, 2015), wherein the value of the original brand is preserved since it is too sacred. As a result, consumers distinguished the use of the two versions of branded fashion goods based on occasion and situation, which required them to purchase and wear both original and counterfeit versions. These findings are in line with sacred consumption highlighted by Belk et al., (1989), in which material object that infuses a special meaning to an individual will be set apart from everyday usage, which is also known as profane consumption (Loroz, 2006).

In preserving the hidden meaning behind the object, the consumers carefully used their original branded fashion goods as they delivered special meaning to them. However, the need to be associated with the branded fashion goods in daily lives led to the consumption of counterfeit versions. This is ascribed to the fact that the consumers believed that the brand is congruent with their self-image and represents their personal characteristics or current self-image (Cho, 2015); thus, refusing to detach themselves from the brand for daily consumption. The consumers attributed the consumption of counterfeit goods as a tool to protect the original version; signifying profane consumption as suitable for daily consumption.

The consumers in this study were committed to their favorite brand as they were not willing to be detached from the brand for daily consumption, signifying brand intimacy. Cho and Fiore (2015) noted that consumers treat their favourite brand similar to building long-term friendship, thus having a sense of intimacy with the brand. To keep their relationship with the brand, consumers repurchase their favorite brand in counterfeit version, which is more worthwhile for daily consumption without any worry to preserve the value of the original goods. The literature also highlights brand love, where consumers recognize social and psychological benefits from their long-lasting brand relationship (F. Huber et al., 2010).

By consuming both versions, the consumers were able to protect the "sacredness" of their original branded fashion goods by wearing and using them only during special occasion, besides keeping them as precious collection for the goods were too valuable to be worn for daily usage. These consumers did not mind spending some resources (time, effort, and money) to search the identical copied as a substitute of the original version for their daily usage. Ahuvia et al., (2013) classified counterfeit consumers who purchased both categories of original and counterfeit luxury brands as "omnivorous buyers" who had the urge to create their "desired wardrobe". Although these "omnivorous" consumers can afford to purchase the original luxury brand, they are not satisfied purchasing only the original luxury brand as it enables them to save more cost in owning more collection and design. As for the informants in this study, those who practiced sacred consumption can be classified as "omnivorous" consumers, as their aim is to protect and preserve their original branded fashion goods, thus the need to purchase both versions of the branded fashion goods.

5. CONCLUSION

This study elucidates a significant meaning of counterfeit consumption with the emergent themes of special occasion and prized collection from consumers' lived experiences which could be described as sacred consumption. Sacred consumption has been discussed widely in the context of ritual object associated with traditional religious aspects, such as Christmas consumption (Tynan & McKechnie, 2006), Islamic consumption (Jafari et al., 2011), and responsible consumption (Cherrier, 2009; Kunchambo et al., 2017), which infuse a symbolic meaning. Turning to this present study, the consumers' involvement in counterfeit consumption infused a special meaning that can be regarded as sacred consumption from their lived experiences. As both of the themes (special occasion and prized collection) are absent in the literature, this study significantly contributes to the counterfeit consumption body of knowledge.

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Exploring Islamic Social Finance Practices in Somaliland: Issues and Prospects

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Abstract

Islamic Social Finance (ISF) is a sector consisting of philanthropic instruments such as, among others, obligatory charity or almsgiving (*Zakat*), Islamic endowment (*Waqf*), voluntary charity (*Sadaqah*), and Islamic microfinance. The primary goal of ISF is to alleviate poverty and improve the socio-economic conditions of society. The current study employed the content analysis technique to explore ISF practices, namely *zakat* and *waqf*, in Somaliland, a country with high poverty rates. Findings suggest that *zakat* and *waqf* are currently not utilized effectively, thus not distributing to poverty alleviation. Some of the issues facing the development of *zakat* include a lack of a legal framework. On the other hand, although *waqf* is utilized for religious and educational purposes, it is not used for poverty mitigation and hence, not exploited fully. Despite the vast issues facing their development, *zakat* and *waqf* have the potential to grow and address the extensive poverty in the country. The conclusions of this study are beneficial to the regulators and researchers.

Keywords: Islamic social finance, Islamic philanthropy, *zakat*, *waqf*, poverty alleviation, Somaliland

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Social Finance (ISF) is defined as a sector comprising traditional Islamic institutions based on philanthropy, i.e., *Zakat* (obligatory charity/almsgiving/levy on wealth), *Sadaqah* (voluntary charity), *Waqf* (Islamic endowment); those based on cooperation, e.g., *Qard* (interest-free loan) and *Kafalah* (guarantee); and the contemporary Islamic microfinance institutions (IRTI, 2017). The main objective of ISF is to meet the needs of the poor and to make a dent in poverty (IRTI, 2017; IRTI, 2020). According to Lalani (2019), the principles behind ISF are economic justice, shared prosperity, and inclusive participation. These principles come from the values of Islamic philanthropy, which include standard giving practices to meet the needs of the poor in society. Notably, the overall aim of *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) is to promote welfare which is achieved by promoting necessities or essentials that entail the basic elements of a good life and protecting them constitutes the objectives of *Shari'ah* (*Maqasid Al-Shari'ah*) (Ahmed, 2011).

ISF instruments have been vital components in Muslim societies. They have been used to help the poor and needy individuals in the community through wealth redistribution to achieve socio-economic justice and development. Such instruments are categorized as obligatory and non-obligatory in terms of their payment. *Zakat*, a levy on wealth when it reaches a threshold known as *nisab* (i.e., a minimum amount of wealth so that *zakat* can be imposed), must be paid by Muslims. Two types of *zakat* that Muslims must pay are *Zakat al-Mal* (*zakat* paid yearly on wealth when it reaches *nisab*) and *Zakat al-Fitr* (*zakat* paid yearly, normally in the form of food items, during or at the end of the month of *Ramadan*). The *muzakki* (payer) of *zakat* is a wealthy individual who holds *zakat*-able items at a certain amount for a certain time and is given to eight certain recipient categories (Abduh, 2019). These recipients are prescribed in the holy *Qur'an* and are determined by Allah SWT; they are classified into eight groups of people (*asnaf*), namely the poor, the needy, *zakat* administrators, non-Muslims who embraced

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Islam, those in bondage, the debt-ridden, in the cause of Allah, and the wayfarer or those who are stranded or traveling with few resources. *Zakat*-able items include goods and merchandise, agricultural products, livestock, gold, silver, buried precious metals and minerals, unexpended salary/wage for a whole year, savings in banks, and investments (see Abduh, 2019). However, *zakat* is not levied on income that is used for consumption and items of wealth that are for personal and family use, as well as wealth that is categorized as the means of production or capital goods (World Bank & Islamic Development Bank Group, 2016). The Islamic Development Bank estimates that the potential of *zakat* is estimated to be as much as USD 1 trillion globally (Lalani, 2019).

In contrast, all the other ISF instruments are done on a voluntary basis. *Waqf* is also another important instrument. *Waqf* (Plural *Awqaf*) literally means to hold, confine, or prohibit something or cause it to stand still. Technically, the definition of *waqf* is to release the ownership of a dedicated property (*Mawquf*) from the donor (*Waqif*) for the sake of Allah SWT so that the benefits and incomes generated from the *mawquf* are only available for religious and humanity purposes (Abduh, 2019). *Waqf* is a form of charity that can be characterized as *sadaqah jariyah* (ongoing charity) and can be in the form of endowed public buildings, mosques, accommodation for travellers, a well, canal (Ahmed, 2004: 28), educational institutions, libraries, hospitals, etc. (Shirazi, 2014) and is administered by a *Mutawalli* or *Nazir* (manager) (Edriyanti et al., 2021). From the economic perspective, *waqf* refers to the investment of funds in creative properties that provide usufruct or revenues for future consumption by beneficiaries (Pirasteh & Abdolmaleki, 2007). Regarding the potential of global *waqf* resources, a World Bank and Islamic Development Bank Group report mentions that the annual *waqf* potential is approaching USD 500 billion (Abduh, 2019).

Another crucial donation based ISF instrument is *sadaqah* which is a charitable act that involves paying an amount voluntarily to help the needy and is religiously encouraged (Zain & Ali, 2017). Additionally, Islamic microfinance is another vital instrument that can be utilized as a mechanism both to target wealth creation and to offer solutions to raising the living standards of the poor (Malim, 2011). Islamic microfinance institutions provide funding for micro-entrepreneurs to operate micro-enterprises without charging *riba* (interest). Such institutions are essential for poverty reduction, financial inclusion, and economic growth through the economic activities of these micro-enterprises.

As mentioned earlier, the primary purpose of ISF is to alleviate poverty and address socio-economic issues. In the context of this study, the potential of ISF in Somaliland can be enormous. Somaliland, a Sub-Saharan Muslim nation located in the Horn of Africa, is, according to the World Bank, one of the poorest countries in the world, with high unemployment and high inequality (World Bank, 2015). Somaliland is a low-income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 348, thus ranking it the 4th lowest in the world, only ahead of Burundi, DR Congo, and Malawi, with More than 1 in 4 people in urban Somaliland and more than 1 in 3 people in rural Somaliland living in poverty (World Bank, 2015). As one of the poorest countries in the world, its poverty rates are higher, and human development indicators are lower than other least-developed countries in the region (MoNPD, 2017). Meanwhile, the economic shutdown resulting from the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in December 2019 has inversely affected the country's economy and increased unemployment (Mohamed, 2021).

In view of this situation, this study seeks to explore the current practices of ISF, namely *zakat* and *waqf*, and examine the implications of such practices on poverty alleviation in Somaliland. Moreover, Issues that are facing the development of ISF are assessed in this study. To the researcher's knowledge, no previous research has investigated ISF practices in the country. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the previous studies, while section 3 provides the research method. Section 4 presents the findings and discussion. Finally, section 5 sets forth the conclusion and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Zakat and *sadaqah* have been instrumental in addressing social issues such as reducing poverty and hunger, promoting well-being, helping the poor and orphans, paying hospital bills of the poor, paying tuition fees of needy students, helping the debt-burdened, empowering the unemployed, etc. (Odeduntan & Oni, 2016). Similarly, *waqf* has been used for the welfare of society and has been an important pillar in every conceivable enterprise of social benefits, such as mosques, universities, schools, hospitals, orphanages, houses for the poor, wells, public infrastructure, cemeteries, libraries, books, and animal welfare, etc. (Shirazi, 2014; Odeduntan & Oni, 2016). Notably, *waqf* is useful in all aspects, including education, access to finance to facilitate entrepreneurial innovation, health care, water, sanitation, and many more (see Khan, 2007). On the other hand, Islamic microfinance is proven to be an effective tool in, among others, poverty alleviation, improving income levels, and growth of businesses (see, e.g., Rokhman, 2013; Gumel et al., 2014; Alkhan & Hassan, 2021).

More recently, a multitude of studies assessed the role of ISF during the Covid-19 pandemic. These studies show that ISF instruments such as *zakat*, *waqf*, and charitable spending were effective in mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic (see, e.g., Gwadabe & Rahman, 2020; AbdulKareem et al., 2022). Others examined the role of ISF in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (e.g., Abduh, 2019; Razak et al., 2020).

Muhammad (2019) scrutinized the *zakat* system in seven high-income Islamic countries, namely Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, using the content analysis technique. The author concludes that these countries have different practices of *zakat* in terms of governance, collection, distribution, use of modern technology, and transparency. These countries have established a centralized *zakat* system which the government manages, especially by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, except for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In Kuwait, *zakat* is mutually managed by the Ministry of *Waqf* & Islamic Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. In Saudi Arabia, because *zakat* is considered a form of taxation, the Ministry of Finance manages both *zakat* and taxes. Notably, the *zakat* collection methods are also different for these countries. For instance, although said ministries regulate *zakat*, payment is voluntary in Bahrain, Brunei, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. In contrast, *zakat* payment is mandatory to be paid by all Saudi individuals and companies, while in Kuwait, *zakat* payment is mandatory under the Ministry of Finance and voluntary under the Ministry of *Waqf* & Islamic Affairs (Muhammad, 2019). Moreover, in Qatar, the country adopted voluntary *zakat* payment law. However, all listed public companies must pay 2.5 percent of their net annual profits. In terms of the *zakat* to be collected (i.e., *zakat al-fitr* and *zakat al-mal*), all countries collect both types except Saudi Arabia, which collects only *zakat al-mal* (*zakat* on wealth). When it comes to the use of modern technology, *zakat* can be paid through online methods for all these countries, hence, allowing the *muzakki* to pay *zakat* anytime and anywhere. Besides, most countries provide *zakat* calculators on their *zakat* websites.

Regarding the issues, the author reported several issues facing the *zakat* systems in these countries. One major common issue with the *zakat* systems in Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia is the lack of transparency regarding statistics related to the collection and distribution of *zakat*. The author sheds light on the importance of disclosure of such statistics to the general public because transparency is one of the criteria of good governance, which will instill compliance behaviour in people. Other issues include *zakat* funds are not separated from *sadaqah* in Bahrain; criticism of the way *zakat* is managed and monitored in Brunei; lack of exemptions from tax when *zakat* is paid, and lack of fairness in its distribution in Kuwait; vague interpretation of *zakat* laws in Qatar and Saudi Arabia; recipients of *zakat* including non-*asnaf* in the United Arab Emirates.

Similarly, using content analysis and interviews, Razak et al. (2020) investigated ISF practices in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sudan. The study shows that the countries have their applications, management, procedures, and system to regulate, manage, and distribute *zakat*, *waqf*, and *sadaqah*. Their results show that ISF instruments could eradicate poverty, reduce hunger, and be used for educational purposes. In terms of practices, there are private and public *waqf* institutions in Indonesia, while in Malaysia, *waqf* is run by the state governments. *Waqf* is used mainly for education in these countries and building mosques, Islamic schools, and universities. The authors identified some issues facing the further development of ISF in these countries. Unlike Malaysia and Sudan, where *zakat* payment is compulsory and collected by the state, *zakat* payment is non-compulsory in Indonesia, thus, a small portion is collected compared to the huge potential. Moreover, the authors highlight some issues and challenges facing *waqf*, including management efficiency, low levels of awareness, and *waqf* data not being publicly available.

In Somaliland, no previous research has examined ISF practices. However, very few studies have assessed the role of Islamic microfinance in poverty reduction. For instance, Yonis (2012) analyzed the impact of two Islamic microfinance institutions' services on poverty alleviation in Somaliland, utilizing questionnaires and interviews to gather the data. The findings demonstrate that the Islamic microfinance institutions were unsuccessful in reaching the hardcore poor. The author identified some of the causes of these institutions' failure, including lack of public support, limited institutional capacity, and insufficient financial and human capital resources. Challenges facing the said institutions ranged from lack of proper institutional and legal frameworks, lack of supportive policies and enabling environment, lack of a supervisory framework to insufficient teaching and training of clients and staff and absence of research and development of products as well as *Shari'ah* issues.

That being said, this paper explores the current practices of *zakat* and *waqf* in Somaliland. No previous research has investigated *zakat* and *waqf* practices and assessed the issues facing them in the country. Therefore, this study reviews *zakat* and *waqf* practices. Also, some of the issues facing their development are inspected. At last, the implications of such practices on poverty alleviation in the country are discussed.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study generally aims to explore *zakat* and *waqf* practices in Somaliland. In doing so, the study focuses on the following components – *zakat* governance, *zakat* laws, *zakat* collection, *zakat* payment, *zakat* distribution, and *zakat* beneficiaries. In terms of *waqf*, the following components are inspected – *waqf* governance, *waqf* management, and forms of *waqf*. A Qualitative research method is adopted by employing the content analysis technique. This technique was conducted by following the analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and documentation of information gathered from secondary data sources, namely newspaper articles, magazines, and reports. Since no previous study explored ISF practices in the country and due to limited online sources discussing *zakat* and *waqf* in the country, the content analysis was conducted exclusively on the sources mentioned above.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Zakat*: practices and issues

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam, and it is obligatory for Muslims to pay it when their wealth reaches the *nisab*. In Somaliland, as of 2020, the population is estimated to be approximately 4.2 million by the Central Statistics Department. The country's population is 100% Muslim (Yonis, 2012). Thus, since *zakat* payment is an Islamic obligation, it is expected that *zakat* is paid by eligible people and businesses in Somaliland.

In Somaliland, the *zakat* governance structure is centralized (i.e., administered only by the government). The governing body of *zakat* is the *Zakat* Department under the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs. The department was initially established in 2015 and functioned as a government agency. However, the said agency was dissolved in 2021 by the current government and was relocated under the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs (Somaliland Post, 2021). Although initially established in 2015, there haven't been *zakat* collections, laws, or regulations related to *zakat* matters. Cabdi (2021a) highlights that in the National Conference on *zakat*, which was the first national conference on *zakat* matters organized by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs held in 2021, the *zakat* department officials stressed the need for the implementation of *zakat* laws and policies. This indicates that currently, there are no dedicated laws governing *zakat* in the country. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that some businesses claim that they pay *zakat* (Somali House, 2021); however, subject to their discretion as *zakat* payment is not compulsory.

In terms of *zakat* beneficiaries, a report states that some people in Somaliland obtain income from *zakat*. According to the Somaliland Household Survey (SLHS) conducted in 2013, households' sources of income included wages, remittances, non-agricultural self-employment, livestock, alimony, and *zakat* (World Bank, 2015). Notably, households drawing income from alimony and *zakat* accounted for 5% in urban areas and 9% in rural areas. Unfortunately, the SLHS report does not specify the exact percentage of households that draw income solely from *zakat* nor the *muzakkis* (payers) of these *zakat* funds. At this juncture, however, it is possible to conclude that *zakat* is voluntarily paid and distributed directly to the beneficiaries, whether by individuals or businesses, as paying *zakat* is an Islamic obligation. According to the report, the poor in both urban and rural areas are among the beneficiaries of *zakat* (see World Bank, 2015).

There are numerous issues facing the development of *zakat* in the country, including a lack of laws governing *zakat*. In order to officially establish a functioning *zakat* system in the country, it is vital to introduce laws regulating *zakat* (i.e., a legal framework). The aim of enacting *zakat* laws is to provide the legal framework of *zakat*, details for administration and general management of *zakat*, details of *zakat*-able and non-*zakat*-able wealth, details on the collection and distribution process, proper identification of payers and beneficiaries, and other rules on governance and management of the *zakat* funds (Saad & Farouk, 2019). Therefore, without a legal framework guiding the *zakat* activities in the country, it will be impossible to manage, collect, and distribute *zakat* to the *asnaf* (beneficiaries). Another major issue could be that *zakat* funds could go to others than the *asnaf*. Because of the lack of *zakat* collection by either the government or any authorized entity, payers of *zakat* could pay to beneficiaries that are not among the *asnaf*; thus, the importance of *zakat* institutions that manage to ensure that *zakat* funds go to the meant *asnaf*. Furthermore, a lack of public awareness and or knowledge of the importance of paying *zakat* could be another issue facing the development of *zakat*, as stated by Cabdi (2021a). As people are more aware of the obligation of paying *zakat*, *nisab* knowledge, and the potential of *zakat* in addressing social issues such as poverty and crimes resulting from youth unemployment, they may be motivated to pay *zakat*. Indeed, many studies show that the level of *zakat* awareness and knowledge motivates and affects people's interest in paying *zakat* (e.g., Syahrullah & Ulfah, 2016; Yusufarto et al., 2020; Adilla et al., 2021).

4.2 Waqf: practices and issues

Waqf is a form of ongoing charity (*sadaqah jariyah*) characterized by perpetuity. Kahf defines *waqf* as “holding a *Maal* (an asset) and preventing its consumption for the purpose of repeatedly extracting its usufruct for the benefit of an objective representing righteousness or philanthropy” (Kahf 1998). The *mawquf* (endowed asset) can be a physical property such as a plot of land or a building (i.e., immovable *waqf*), and it also can be in monetary form (i.e., cash *waqf*) (Aziz et al., 2013).

In Somaliland, the *waqf* governance structure is decentralized and consists of a public managed by the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs and those administered by private institutions. The Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs facilitates *waqf* management after the *waqif* donates the *mawquf*, commonly mosques, *madrasah* schools (i.e., schools dedicated to Islamic studies), and lands, where the ministry is entrusted with the responsibility of managing these *waqf* assets. After a *waqif* builds a mosque or a *madrasah* or donates land, the ministry maintains them to ensure their perpetuity. Adnan (2021) states that the management and maintenance of the *mawquf* is one of the said ministry’s tasks. On the other hand, common forms of *waqf* donated by either individuals or philanthropy organizations include mosques, educational institutions, and wells, as reported by the press (e.g., Cabdi, 2021b; Maxamed, 2022; Adnan, 2022).

There are several issues facing the further development of *waqf*. First, most forms of *waqf* in the country seem to be mosques and *madrasah* schools. *Waqf* lands are also usually used to establish the said forms of *waqf*. Although these noble forms of *waqf* are imperative for society and are needed to be implemented more across the country, it is crucial that *waqf* is also used as a mechanism to combat poverty and resolve other socio-economic issues. To cope with the widespread poverty in the country, *waqf* can be helpful and potentially lessen its severity. Another issue facing *waqf* could be the lack of publicly available *waqf* data. Since the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs manages some *waqf* assets, *waqf* data must be made available to the public because it will reassure the *waqif* that their donation is managed efficiently and appropriately. It may also motivate potential donors to donate. Another issue could be a lack of awareness and knowledge of *waqf*’s significance in resolving poverty, thus, the importance of increasing the awareness and understanding of *waqf*. The government and the other private actors should make efforts to raise people’s awareness about the different usages of *waqf*, including tackling poverty by donating *waqf* property to benefit the poor, the needy, and the destitute in the community. At last, it is important that the authorities should ensure the introduction of laws and regulations governing *awqaf* in the country to safeguard the preservation and development of endowed assets.

4.3 Implications of current *zakat* and *waqf* practices on poverty alleviation

Poverty is multi-dimensional, whether monetary (i.e., income) or non-monetary such as access to education, water, sanitation, and healthcare facilities. Somaliland is among the world’s poorest countries, with almost 29% of people in urban areas and 38% of those in rural areas classified as living in poverty (World Bank, 2015), ranking it as the 4th poorest country in terms of GDP per capita. Amid this situation, Gaas (2019) highlights that there are no government policies toward poverty alleviation and community-driven programs to empower the poor. That being the case, available and effective instruments that can be utilized to resolve the multi-dimensional poverty in Somaliland could be *zakat* and *waqf*. Despite having the potential and the enabling environment to thrive, *zakat* and *waqf* are not currently effectively used to address the extensive poverty in the country.

Zakat alone, if implemented, managed efficiently, collected, and distributed accordingly in the country, has the potential to alleviate poverty as it provides a permanent mechanism from within the society to constantly transfer wealth from the rich to the poor. Notably, *zakat* has been used as a tool to mitigate poverty in many Muslim countries such as Sudan, Malaysia, Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, where *zakat* funds are distributed to the *asnaf*, especially the poor and the needy (see, e.g., Muhammad, 2019; Razak et al., 2020). A successful model that Somaliland can replicate can be that of Malaysia. In the state of Selangor in Malaysia, *zakat* is managed by the state authorities. Besides distributing *zakat* to the *asnaf*, they introduced an *asnaf* entrepreneurship program to encourage the productive *asnaf* to generate their own income (see Shiyuti & Al-Habshi, 2018). This program is particularly based on the individual’s interest in pursuing an entrepreneurial business activity and is a 100% grant without any repayment scheme. It is meant to cover the daily needs of beneficiaries, economically grow, and create a surplus that enables the *asnaf* to graduate from the *asnaf* status. The program includes training for *asnaf* entrepreneurs, which includes courses, soft skills, and technical skills. The program provides capital to fund entrepreneurs’ projects and is supervised by the *zakat* authorities to ensure they remain in the program. That being said, Somaliland should set up an effective *zakat* system for collecting and distributing *zakat* to the *asnaf* to alleviate the widespread poverty in the country. Later, if such a system flourishes, the authorities might endeavor to use *zakat* funds to create sustainable sources of income through entrepreneurship and income-generating programs for the productive, willing, and capable *asnaf*. This

approach could be a long-term solution to mitigate poverty, enhance living standards, and create wealth and income streams for the *asnaf* entrepreneurs.

In terms of *waqf*, it should be used more efficiently to tackle poverty in the country. Currently, *awqaf* are mostly in the form of mosques and *madrasah* schools. *Waqf* lands are also largely used to establish the said forms of *waqf*. However, it is important that *awqaf*, especially *waqf* lands, are also used as a tool to alleviate income-based poverty. For instance, if a *waqif* donates land or a building for public use (i.e., *waqf khayri*) and commercial centers or projects are established on the donated property, the proceeds can be spent either on necessary periodic maintenance of *waqf* property to ensure its perpetuity or on initiatives, programs, and projects, that aim to reduce poverty, produce the essential facility of social services, and improve the living standards of the poor. This way, the *waqf* lands will be developed into a productive economic asset that generates perpetual income or usufruct for the beneficiaries and even employment opportunities for the public. Another famous form of *waqf* for poverty alleviation is cash *waqf*. Cash *waqf*, a form of liquid asset, can be raised from donors through cash and mobile money transfers. The donated cash funds can either be directly channelled to the development of any *waqf* project/program or pooled as a *waqf* asset and managed by an entity to be invested so that it generates returns. Subsequently, the net returns can be distributed to the beneficiaries, whether the beneficiaries are the poor, the needy, mosques, schools, orphanages, clinics, hospitals, etc. *Waqf* can also be integrated with Islamic microfinance to alleviate poverty. A *waqf* fund (e.g., cash *waqf* fund) provides *riba*-free lending to micro-entrepreneurs to create wealth and raise the living standards of the beneficiaries. Therefore, Somaliland should harness the benefits of *zakat* and *waqf* to resolve the different dimensions of poverty in the country.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study explored *zakat* and *waqf* practices and assessed some of the issues facing their development in Somaliland. The country is one of the poorest in the world, with high poverty rates. The findings suggest that despite their potential, *zakat* and *waqf* are currently not utilized effectively to fight poverty and address other socio-economic issues. Some of the issues facing the development of *zakat* include the lack of a legal framework that guides *zakat* and low levels of public awareness. Likewise, although used for religious and educational purposes, *waqf* is not used efficiently to address the extensive income-based poverty in the country. However, although many issues face the development of *zakat* and *waqf* in the country, they can grow into effective tools to mitigate poverty. If well implemented and managed efficiently, *zakat* and *waqf* can resolve the country's socio-economic issues, such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy through access to education, poor health care, etc.

The findings of this study are beneficial to the regulators as it demonstrates the importance of setting up a *zakat* system and a legal framework of *zakat* to exploit its potential to tackle the multi-dimensional poverty in Somaliland. Moreover, this study sheds light on the importance of harnessing the capacity of *waqf* to serve poverty alleviation purposes. The combination of these two ISF instruments could solve not only the monetary dimension of poverty but also non-monetary dimensions. Besides that, the current study may benefit researchers and academicians by informing them about *zakat* and *waqf* practices as well as some of the issues facing them in Somaliland. Hence, future studies should conduct further research on this topic. Particularly, subsequent studies should utilize primary data collection techniques, such as interviews with the practitioners, to obtain a deeper understanding of the practices and issues facing the development of *zakat* and *waqf* in the country. Additionally, research is required to examine how businesses and individuals practice *zakat*, whether they pay it or not, how they distribute it, the beneficiaries of *zakat*, which type of *zakat* they pay, etc. Moreover, factors influencing the motivation to pay *zakat* should be investigated by future research in order to understand the behavioral intentions of potential *muzakkis*.

This study generally recommends that the authorities implement an effective *zakat* system and facilitate the further development of *waqf* to alleviate the extensive poverty in the country. Further, this study sets forth several specific recommendations. First, the administrators responsible for *zakat* and *waqf* management must be competent to undertake such tasks. Second, it is important to make any data related to *waqf* and *zakat* available to the general public. Transparency is certainly one of the criteria of good governance, which will raise the confidence of the *muzakki* and the *waqif* and assure them that their donations are managed as intended. It may also motivate *muzakkis* and potential *waqifs* to donate. Third, raising the awareness of the general public on the importance of paying *zakat* and donating, whether such donations are *waqf* or *sadaqah*, is of utmost importance to tackle poverty. Finally, since the government of Somaliland has aligned and incorporated the SDGs into its National Development Plans, viable tools to reach these SDGs can be *zakat* and *waqf*. It is a well-known fact that financing the SDGs requires large sums of funds; therefore, the government could finance these goals with the help of a philanthropic fund comprising *zakat* and *waqf*.

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Implementation of Home-Based Teaching and Learning During COVID-19 and Future Outbreak

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has an enormous impact on human life. In the context of education, information technology (IT) has taken the role of the classroom through online teaching. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to explore teachers' perception of the concept of home-based teaching and its implementation. This study applied a qualitative research methodology where semi-structured interviews were conducted through phone calls involving several primary school teachers in Perlis, Malaysia. The study found that the teachers understood the concept of home-based teaching and obtained adequate information for the purpose of teaching from responsible parties. Teachers also implemented their home-based teaching through various platforms such as Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Telegram with varied teaching methodologies to ensure smooth teaching processes. This study emphasizes that effective communication, training, collaboration, creativity and constructive feedback are pertinent to ensure effective implementation of home-based teaching and learning.

Keywords: implementation of Home-based teaching and learning, Covid-19, Perlis

1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is a disease that has changed the pattern of daily human activities. The virus is transmitted through direct human contact and airborne particles, resulting in the death of millions of people all over the world. According to Hossain et al., (2021), Cuenca-Soto et al., (2021) most countries discontinued all in-person engagements, such as; in-person education, due to the respiratory sickness posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, educators resorted to quickly converting their classroom lessons to online versions. The use of the internet is not new in the education field as it has been commonly used since 1990 through online learning, distance teaching, massive open online courses (MOOCs) (Singh and Thurman, 2019; Wahid et al. 2019), and other types of learning via the internet. Although traditional pedagogical technologies such as a Smartboard or PowerPoint are widely accepted and used, the actual integration of technology-supported teaching for pedagogical purposes is yet another level (Van der Spoel et al., 2020).

In recent years, research shows that there has been a change to the teaching and learning methodology in which the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning has been replaced with the new method of online teaching and learning that uses information technology (Oliveira et al., 2021; Weidlich & Kalz, 2021; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the number of social media applications has increased. Online platforms such as Webex, Zoom, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Classroom (GC) are used as the medium to continue the teaching and learning processes as the work from home (WFH) policy has been implemented (Tsao et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2020). In the light of that, teaching and learning processes are conducted from home without the need to go to school.

Just like other countries in the world, Malaysia is not an exception in receiving the same impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, The Federal Gazette Emergency and the implementation of (WFH) policy have affected the schooling system of the country (Mudaly & Mudaly, 2021). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education

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(MOE) (2020) has introduced Home-based teaching and learning that can be implemented from home, community center, or any other suitable locations. Paredes et al., (2020) demonstrated that teaching can be implemented online and/or offline or off-site in a structured and planned manner. Hence, a teacher can implement teaching from home by using one of the methods or a combination of the two methods depending on the suitability. For instance, if the school is located in a rural area with no internet accessibility, the offline method should be used.

To ensure the continuity of the teaching and learning process, MOE (2020) had released a teaching and learning manual online, 'Teaching and Learning at Home Manual' to help teachers implement their home-based teaching and learning as an alternative to the new norm. Therefore, this home-based teaching and learning manual can provide guidance to teachers in implementing home-based teaching and learning in a structured and planned manner, enabling students to follow it optimally. Apart from that, the manual can also be used as a reference for school administrators, district education offices (PPD), state education departments (JPN), as well as other divisions involved in MOE.

1. Online home-based teaching and learning happens when there is available access to the internet and to the use of devices that allow students to learn in real-time via the following:
 - Learning platforms such as Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMa), Cikgootube, EduWebTV, and social media applications; or
 - Applications such as Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams live streaming.
 - Gamification, video, audio clip, eBook, recording, or online assignments.
2. The implementation of home-based teaching and learning requires students to use devices with screens such as computers, laptops, tablets, or smartphones within a certain period. The time used on these devices is called students' screen time.
3. Guidelines on the maximum screen time based on age taken from www.eyepromise.com with reference from The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and World Health Organization (WHO) are as follows: Screen time a day for preschool is 1-hour, primary school is 1-2 hours, lower secondary is 2-3 hours, and upper secondary is 3-4 hours.
4. Teachers need to set the appropriate screen time by considering parents/guardians' opinions.
5. Offline home-based teaching and learning happens when students learn using devices such as computers, laptops, tablets, or smartphones without access to the internet. Learning process can also occur when students use textbooks or other learning materials.
6. Teachers can download materials in the form of videos, audios, slides, notes, and exercises from sources as mentioned in paragraphs 7.1.1 and 7.1.3. The process of downloading the materials is done when there is access to the internet and given to the students through the appropriate medium of communication.
7. Teachers need to set the appropriate offline screen time by considering parents/guardians' opinions.
8. Off-site learning is a learning method that happens in a location such as a community center, or any premises declared as a temporary evacuation center due to a disaster or epidemic. Off-site learning is implemented in accordance with the Surat Siaran Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia Bilangan 8, 2016 Garis Panduan Pengurusan Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Akibat Bencana.
9. Learning process can occur independently or with guidance from the Academic Support Team (AST) which consists of PPD officers or appointed schoolteachers, (MOE,2020).

Based on the manual provided by the MOE above, there are various methods that can be used by teachers in implementing online teaching and learning sessions including modules, home-based projects, and other methods such as flipped classroom, inquiry-based learning, mastery learning, contextual learning, and problem-solving learning. The implementation methods have also been stated in which teachers should restructure their annual lesson plan, determine the flexible delivery methods depending on the current situation by considering students' resources; preparing materials that are easily obtained, accessible, and suitable with the home-based teaching and learning method used. Additionally, teachers also need to make sure that students receive their tasks and exercises planned, and use a variety of assessment methods namely quizzes, exercises, and projects to determine students' achievement.

Though the guidelines are given with clear details, the question of to what extent are the teachers prepared in implementing online teaching and learning or home-based teaching and learning remains. This is due to the fact that for some of the methods mentioned, not all teachers have the knowledge and skills in IT to conduct activities such as the flipped classroom. Furthermore, MOE has also stated that the teaching and learning process should also consider the resources that students have. Here, the basic resources are devices and internet access. Therefore, there are issues on the challenges and limitations in implementing home-based teaching and learning that need to be considered if it is to be implemented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although online teaching and learning is used as an alternative to replace the face-to-face method, there is an argument in teachers' perception of home-based teaching and learning. Thus, a clear definition of home-based teaching and learning is important as it contributes to the success of its implementation in the future.

The definition explained by MOE (2020), Schultz & Demers (2020) described home-based teaching and learning as one of the teaching and learning methods that are planned in order to create a deep virtual experience. Here, the term planning is used for the aspect of before and during its implementation. The aspect of planning is being emphasized to achieve the goals of the teaching and learning process which are to provide in-depth knowledge and experience on the topics learned. In other words, since there are no face-to-face activities, online teaching and learning requires teachers to plan their lessons thoroughly as good and organized lesson plans will provide students with the best learning experience.

The planning aspect was also stressed as according to Korkmaz & Toraman, (2020); Noor et al., (2020), and Willging & Johnson, (2004), the problem of interaction and reaction during online teaching could lead to ineffective teaching and learning session since there is no face-to-face interaction as traditional classes, making it difficult for students to directly ask questions and get answers. On that account, teachers' perspectives on the definition and concept of online teaching and learning are very important as they need to change from the old method to a new method that requires them to master instructional design and to be skilled in using certain software when planning their lessons and in assessing students in the future (Schultz & DeMers, 2020). This shows that teachers in the new norm era need to understand and make appropriate changes during this pandemic.

Apart from teachers' perspectives on the method of implementing home-based teaching and learning, up till today, there are issues with the effectiveness of online teaching and learning methods (Racheva, 2018). Despite some of the advantages, such as safer environment -since there is no need for the face-to-face meeting, especially during a pandemic-, time-saving, minimum mobility, improving students' critical skills, and allowing students to gain knowledge and experience beyond the boundaries of the classroom due to the use of technology (Sezer, 2016; Feeney et al., 2008), there are also negative effects such as adverse effects on bone growth due to excessive use of technology for a long time (McVeigh et al., 2016), negative students' emotional development (Boyd et al., 2014), and also underage students' exposure to inappropriate, unfiltered, and unsafe information (Dickson et al., 2019). As a result, the issues of monitoring and appropriate methods to ensure the health and welfare of teachers and students came into view.

Aside from that, there are also issues of teachers' consideration and concern on the challenges faced by some students in terms of facilities, equipment, and access to the internet especially for students from low and middle socioeconomic backgrounds, be it in rural or city areas. Economic constraints for the poor will prevent students from being fully involved in the online teaching and learning session (Morgan, 2020). Therefore, teachers need to know students' backgrounds before implementing home-based teaching and learning methods.

The implementation of home-based teaching and learning has its own advantages and challenges, and a few aspects need to be taken into consideration. Noor et al., (2020) stated if teachers provide information and reminders before the class session, it could lead to effective communication between teachers and students, making the online teaching and learning session more impactful. Additionally, teachers could also apply the approach of group learning suggested by Ozakara and Cakir (2018) in which if students could not participate in online classes, they could contact their classmates to obtain information on that specific class. Hence, teachers need to explore and use various teaching approaches and applications that could attract students' interest to participate actively in online classes.

To conclude, home-based teaching and learning is one of the methods used to ensure the continuity of the teaching and learning process especially during COVID- 19 pandemic. Although there are challenges in its implementation, if all related parties mainly the teachers are clear on the needs of online teaching and learning, the techniques in

conducting online classes, cooperation between students and parents as well as deep and comprehensive involvement of the government in providing the infrastructure needed to ensure that all parties could have access to a good internet connection, home-based teaching and learning sessions can be implemented successfully.

2.1 Research objectives

This study is done with the objectives to examine the extent of teachers' perception of online teaching and learning, and the extent of its implementation through the method of working from home (WFH) during the movement control order (MCO) gazetted by the government.

The research questions are as follows:

- i. What are perceptions of teachers towards home-based teaching and learning?
- ii. How do teachers implement home-based teaching and learning during Covid 19?

3. METHODOLOGY

The researchers had chosen the method of case study, and a national primary school located in Arau, Perlis was chosen as the location of study. The school is situated by the roadside and is one of the excellent schools in Perlis. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method as it is seen as the best method to acquire in-depth information (Creswell, 2014).

Table 1: List of participants

Participants	Subject teaching
Teacher N	Geography
Teacher A	Mathematic
Teacher R	REBT
Teacher I	History
Teacher M	Science

Table 2: Details on the day, date and time of the interview

No	Participants	Day	Date	Time
1.	Teacher N	Monday	24 May 2021	10.00 a.m. – 10.40 a.m.
2.	Teacher A	Monday	24 May 2021	3.00 p.m. – 3.45 p.m.
3.	Teacher R	Wednesday	26 May 2021	2.30 p.m. – 3.15 p.m.
4.	Teacher I	Monday	31 May 2021	9.00 a.m. – 9.40 a.m.
5.	Teacher M	Tuesday	1 June 2021	11.00 a.m. -11.40 a.m.

Table 3: Summary of the data analysis process

Level	Activities
One	Data transcription process: i. Transforming audio data into text data
Two	Review: i. Reviewing information from participants of the study ii. Analyzing interview data
Three	Understanding data from interviews: i. Identifying and understanding the interview data ii. Iteration of data analysis
Four	Determining theme and subthemes: i. Identifying codes thematically ii. Categorizing codes according to subthemes iii. Building themes categories based on subthemes. iv. Reviewing themes Validating themes with fellow researchers
Five	Theme analysis: i. Defining themes based on the categories of research questions. ii. Assessing the flow of findings
Six	Writing the findings

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are perceptions of teachers towards home-based teaching and learning?

Generally, all the participants of the study provided different perspectives of online teaching and learning. The findings from the question related to teachers' perception of home-based teaching and learning are that one of the methods needed during the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching session that uses information technology (IT), teaching session that does not involve face-to-face meeting and physical contact, and the use of various teaching platforms such as Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Telegram. The following are the findings from the study related to teachers' perception of home-based teaching and learning.

"The new norm of home-based teaching and learning lack exposure on its meaning previously. Later, it has become a need due to the pandemic. It is a new thing, be it for the students, parents, or even teachers. In my opinion... online teaching and learning is what we know, which is teaching and learning sessions done from home, and is implemented online...." (Teacher N).

"Online teaching is implemented not at school, but from home. Actually, it is more challenging than previous teaching and learning (PdP) as we could not see our students and could not have interaction. Hence, it is hard to receive feedback from students...." (Teacher A).

"In my opinion, home-based teaching and learning implemented during the new norm is when a teaching and learning process is done through cyberspace. Teachers and students need to use the internet for the teaching and learning process. This method is implemented without the need for students and teachers to meet face-to-face" (Teacher R).

"Home-based teaching and learning means that the teaching and learning is implemented online. It requires access to the internet, and students, as well as teachers, need to have any devices. However, if students have a problem with internet connection, we have to use other methods, such as teachers need to prepare modules for the students. If it is done online, question and answer session resume as usual, but without meeting face-to-face and is done remotely...." (Teacher I).

"...in my opinion, home-based teaching and learning is implemented but without meeting face-to-face as conducted in school, but by using various platforms such as Google Meet, Telegram, and WhatsApp to deliver the teaching and learning materials...." (Teacher M).

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in general, the perception of teachers was interviewed that online teaching involves IT, no face-to-face meetings, and requires teachers to have skills so that the teaching session can be done more effectively. This is something that needs to be understood by the teachers, that not all parents could afford to provide the complete facilities such as devices and good internet connection. Thus, if a teacher decides to use the online method which is by using the internet, there will be possibilities of underprivileged students being left behind. That being the case, it needs to be understood that there are other methods which can be used namely calling students, emailing their assignments, or learning materials, or by posting notes to specific students (Morgan, 2020).

As Malaysia implemented home-based teaching and learning as a method in delivering the teaching and learning, again, in order to make it successful, a clear understanding of the definition is very important as teachers need to plan in detail, clear on their students' abilities, devices owned, skills in using the devices as well as access to the internet.

In general, it can be concluded that teachers' perception may further be enhanced with the support of school administrators in sharing the latest information on online learning. Since it is not clear when the pandemic will end, and to ensure that there are no students being left behind, understanding is the first important step for teachers in order to conduct teaching sessions more effectively and smoothly.

Research Question 2: How do teachers implement home-based teaching and learning during Covid 19?

Next, this research is also done with the aim to explore teachers' teaching practices when implementing home-based teaching or online teaching. Based on the findings, it was found that teachers implemented their lessons according to the regulations set by MOE (2020). Some of the ways used by the teachers in implementing online teaching were by using learning platforms such as Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMa), applications such as Google Meet, YouTube, and WhatsApp. There were also some teachers who used textbooks, modules, and notes that were given in advance before the movement control order (MCO) was gazette.

"...for Form 2 schedule, there is one session of one and a half-hour in a week. Usually, I would use WhatsApp to remind the class and to give the password for Google Meet. Then, I would use DELIMa and Telegram applications to share files and learning materials since it is more convenient compared to WhatsApp...." (Teacher N).

"I have prepared modules or exercises or small notes for the students to refer to before the school was closed, hence I think my teaching session becomes a lot easier...." (Teacher N).

"We look at students' needs based on our experience on MCO last year. It was found that students usually need notes from the teachers. So, I prepared some notes before MCO was announced. Some of the applications that I used were DELIMa which was provided by MOE and YouTube. Apart from that, I also used textbooks and modules which have been distributed before schools were ordered to close by the government...." (Teacher A)

"Usually, one class is for one hour or more, if we follow our home-based teaching and learning schedule, one subject of two hours per day. One hour is for lecture and one hour is for tutorial but sometimes I have provided them with the modules, exercises, I give time for students to complete them. So, I shared the materials in the WhatsApp group. So, they obtain the materials and submit them there in the period of two hours. If it was offline learning, I would completely use the two hours, but if it was online learning, I would use Google Meet for about an hour. I also used OBX. As a teacher, we need to explore a lot of things and find suitable methods for our students...." (Teacher I).

"I follow the allocated time which is two hours per session and only one session in a week. Tutorial is included in the two hours. Usually, I use Google Meet because majority of the students can use Google Meet. In terms of internet connection in my area, I live in the city area so there is no problem..." (Teacher I).

"I use the Wi-Fi facility in my house. The applications that I use are WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Google Classroom...." (Teacher R).

Apart from that, there were also teachers who taught according to a flexible time between teachers and students by taking into consideration break time as well as comfort and enjoyment during study time. A teacher that was interviewed explained that he taught at a flexible time, and sometimes at night because students feel comfortable and enjoy studying at night.

"I teach according to the teaching period assigned by the school, as suggested by the ministry, but sometimes it is quite difficult because of unsuitable timing. For example, I teach Mathematics usually at noon. Usually, teachers and students will rest at that time. I follow the time when students feel it is suitable. The students, they enjoy learning at night and sometimes I will hold my classes at night, but still following the ministry, two hours per teaching and learning session, and two meetings per week...." (Teacher A).

It was found that the teachers perceive that the needs of using applications in home-based teaching and learning and maximizing the use of the application designed by MOE which was DELIMa. Ahmad et al., (2020); Mirau, (2017) stated that online learning could be done by using various applications such as Microsoft, PowerPoint, Microsoft PowerPoint recording, YouTube, PowToon, Prezi, WeVideo, Sound Cloud, Google Slides, SlideShare, Google Drive, Dropbox, Screencast-O-Matic, Video Scribe, Edmodo, Google Classroom, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and Flickr. With abundance of technology that could produce a variety of learning applications in the virtual world, teachers should improve their skills in choosing the applications that suit the topics by also considering students' skills and accessibility to the materials prepared using the applications mentioned. This is because different models of online learning have considered which pedagogical approaches and technologies are most suitable for children's learning needs (Hu et al., 2021). Teachers must be wise in

choosing suitable methods that are appropriate to the teaching context as well as students' background so that the learning objectives can be successfully achieved.

Although the implementation of home-based teaching and learning is seen as challenging, the findings also showed that there were teachers who diversified the methods and medium used in teaching and learning sessions by proactively creating a reminder system, acting early by giving out modules to students before schools were closed, and preparing themselves, early and well by buying devices and creating a mini studio for their own comfort.

Besides, smartphone applications such as WhatsApp and Short Message Service (SMS) are some of the examples on how technology can be used (Verdes et al., 2021). In addition, the use of video conferencing platforms nowadays can offer learning opportunities with fewer time or location constraints (Mirau, 2017; Mitchell, 2020; Jantjies et al., 2018). Despite the gazetted MCO, teachers and students could still interact with each other. According to Muniroh Hamat et al., (2020) teachers can use their creativity to interact with students even from a distance, as long as the teaching and learning process can be implemented successfully. Meanwhile, according to Goliong et al., (2020), MOE had provided links to Google Classroom and Microsoft Team to facilitate teachers in implementing online teaching. Through the links, teachers can easily gain access to digital textbooks, various PdP videos (Eduweb, CikgooTube), and interactive learning links like Edpuzzle, Quizziz, and Kahoot.

4.1 Discussions

4.1.1 Effective communication

Despite the advancement of IT and benefits of distance learning methods, the question of teachers' readiness, teachers' knowledge in IT, and the supports to successfully carry out their lessons remain the same. Clear instructions should be given from time to time by the authoritative parties. In school context, all information received from the ministry and departments needs to be delivered to the teachers to ensure that they are clear on what needs to be done. All information needs to be disseminated from time to time. For instance, information such as when schools are going to reopen, assignments, tests, quizzes, how to deal with technological problems, and how to log in to applications or email must be given to teachers. Social media such as community-wide texting, email, and school websites can be used as a medium of communication. At the same time, effective communication between the ministry, school, and teachers is also needed to ensure teachers' teaching sessions run smoothly and the children can participate in class effectively (Borup et al., 2020; Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Undeniably, parental support is necessary for students to learn successfully in the system of online learning (Hu, et al, 2021; Barr, 2013). There needs to be space for any problems or suggestions for a two-way communication to happen successfully. Having said that, teachers and school administrators always need to communicate, whether to obtain the latest information, sharing ideas for teaching sessions, or in getting opinions regarding teaching activities planned (Chen, 2010).

As Hung et al. (2010), Omodan and Ige (2021) stated that timid students are more interested in online settings than conventional settings. In web-based learning, teachers need to create opportunities for interaction and communication between students and teachers. Likewise, active students can make full use of the online forum, which may offer more opportunities that involve students and teachers together in in-depth dialogues and questions. Asking questions is the best way to delve deeper into the topics and to understand the topics more easily. Moreover, students need to take this opportunity to collaborate with other students online, to prevent losing focus and interest while studying online as well as to keep being motivated. Competence and communication skills in online learning are the important aspects to overcome the limitations of online communication. In this pandemic, effective communication is necessary to ensure that all the information is clear and up to date, and various applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Twitter are fully utilized.

4.1.2 Training

With the new norms, there is a need for teachers to prepare themselves with new knowledge, not only technological knowledge but also in terms of preparing materials and producing interesting and quality teaching materials. Therefore, undergoing a professional development training which includes the elements of appropriate technology, the use of the necessary technological teaching tools, and a shift in pedagogy is a big order to respond to in a short period of time to create a deep learning experience for their students. Bernama (2021) stated that relevant training can be introduced to teachers to expose them to PdPR methods and processes. The training needs to be done online or in face-to-face meetings but by adhering to the strict standard operation procedure (SOP), to

equip teachers so that they can teach in front of the computer screen confidently and effectively. Similarly, intensive retraining for teachers who are involved in teaching Mathematics and Science subjects in English (PPSMI), English language, and vocational streams need to be done promptly and periodically. MOE also needs to improve and strengthen skills development courses for teachers, especially when the school environment returns to normal. Each and every party needs to be aware that the effects of PdPR will not be the same as teaching and learning in the classroom because PdPR is a medium used to support the process of face-to-face learning that could not be conducted due to COVID-19.

4.1.3 Collaboration

In the effort to add on to the diversity of teaching and finding new methods, the concept of PLC needs to be improved. This is because, through collaboration, teachers can exchange opinions and knowledge to find new ideas in finding the suitable approach for their students (Dorneich et al., 2021; Rönnerman et al., 2015). Through the collaborations, teachers can plan lessons together with students on the activities or applications that can attract students' interest and participation in online classes such as brainstorming activities, rocket writing, additional note, group work, and gallery walk. Interaction, as well as communication between fellow teachers, will be able to solve some problems in teaching students (Kemmis et al., 2014) and help them deal with the latest issues in the context of online learning in this new norm.

In addition, parents need to collaborate with teachers by working together with their children in direct learning activities which can also help to improve the bond between parents and their children as they spend more time together. Situations like this allow parents to be the source of comfort in relieving students' anxiety by conversing with their children to help calm them down. It is suggested for parents to provide emotional supports when their children are in emotional instability (Bhamani. et al, 2020). In the context of new norm learning where there is no face-to-face social interaction, collaboration between teachers and parents should take place in monitoring children's emotional stability.

4.1.4 Creativity

One of the aspects that need to be considered by educators is the students' motivation to learn. Creativity and teachers' ability to maximize the potential of IT should be accentuated because the use of these technologies has resulted in increased engagement, enjoyment, and motivation of students, which may also improve learning outcomes. The ease of use and the pedagogical benefits provided by these emerging technologies make them tools with great potential in education (Verdes et al, 2021). From one perspective, online learning can attract students' interest with the presence of many visual colors, videos, and audios, but they will not necessarily stay motivated to participate in the class. This is because learning in solitary, with no face-to-face interaction with fellow friends and teachers can create a sense of loneliness. It is also hard for students to ask questions directly when they encounter problems in understanding a certain topic (Bertin et al., 2012). Quality teaching should be continuously improved, and teachers must strive to provide the best through online teaching and learning sessions, and lessons should be designed creatively, interactively, relevant, student-centered, and group based (Partlow & Gibbs, 2003). Therefore, teachers' creativity in online teaching is an effort that should be made. Though the use of IT may look interactive, there still needs to be a platform for direct question and answer session if students ever encounter difficulties in understanding the topics studied.

4.1.5 Feedback and students' development follow up

Having such an attitude toward home-based teaching and learning might promote mental and physical well-being (Anderson 2020). Teachers also need to check on students regularly, especially those who are less skillful with digital tools (Snelling and Fingal 2020). Checking on feelings of worry or anxiety can have a profound effect on success. During stressful times, heart and passion may be more important than the content needing to be covered. It is also important to note that perfection should not be expected. Instead, teachers should ask students about their academic progress and incorporate their feedback. Some useful strategies include using recordings and reassuring students by phone (Tate 2020). Effective learning can be seen through positive feedback given by students. Questions from students are also a form of feedback on a certain learning session or knowledge that they would want to inquire. Indirectly, it also shows that students are interested in learning. This is in line with Keeton's (2004) study which stated that educators must spend a lot of time in creating effective strategies to deliver online teaching because effective online teaching delivery will facilitate feedback from students, make students ask questions, and expand students' knowledge on that course.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, home-based teaching and learning is a new norm that is applied to ensure the continuity of the learning process. Teachers especially, play a big role in ensuring its successful implementation. Clear instructions from responsible parties as well as teachers' understanding on the implementation of home-based teaching and learning can ensure a smooth and an effective process of online teaching and learning. Teaching sessions also need to be done with various methods in which teachers need to have good knowledge on IT to make the online teaching and learning session interesting. All parties need to work together to ensure the new norm of home-based teaching and learning session can be implemented successfully.

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Sustainable Solid Waste Management towards Urban and Community Sustainability: The Case of E-Idaman

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the sustainable solid waste management initiatives implemented in Kedah and Perlis, Malaysia. Sustainable solid waste management study may assist the government specifically the local authorities of Local Government to find alternative treatment method of municipal solid waste management and also monitoring the cleanliness of the Malaysian environment. This study specifically explores how the Environment Idaman Sdn. Bhd. (E-Idaman) managed the solid waste, with aims to minimize their cost on waste management and also increase its additional income through implementation various initiatives including 4R's (reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery) strategies. It is hoped that the findings from this study will provide insights to government local authorities in dealing with waste management. It also may guide waste management disposal company to practice a holistic waste management with cost effective, using efficient technology and contribute to environmentally friendly.

Keywords: Solid waste management, sustainability, municipal solid waste

1. INTRODUCTION

Cities are hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social, human and economic development. Urban planning, transport systems, water, sanitation, waste management, disaster risk reduction, access to information, education and capacity-building are all relevant issues to sustainable urban development. Further, sustainable community development calls for a significant improvement in the lives by providing adequate shelter for all; improving community management; and promoting sustainable land-use planning and management. It also aims for promoting the integrated provision of environmental infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management; sustainable energy and transport systems in community; community planning and management in disaster-prone areas; sustainable construction industry activities; and human resource development and capacity-building for community development.

One of the focus areas in making cities and community sustainable is promoting an integrated provision of environmental infrastructure including clean water, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management. Government related agency need to recognize the need to be responsive to the demands of the members of the public who will be affected by the organization's actions. One of the main concerns by stakeholders is the effective management of solid waste due to the increase of environmental problems. Thus, the sustainable solid waste management practices deal with waste reduction and waste separation practices are important in achieving harmonization of cities and community sustainability.

In 2015, Malaysia has become a signatory of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that covers three key areas of economy, social and environment with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2017, the Green Technology Master Plan Malaysia (GTMP) 2017-2030 was released to further guide the push.

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This GTMP focuses on 6 initial key sectors which consider having high potential to facilitate green growth in the country which also include the waste management as one of the elements. One of the main concerns of GTMP 2017- 2030 related to waste sectors is how to treat and dispose waste and how to recover the resource which is dealing sustainable waste management Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water Malaysia (2017).

The definition of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) is open to administrative interpretation which may vary widely between countries, agencies and even local jurisdictions. The MSW is refer to the solid waste generated at residences and commercial establishments (i.e., offices, retail shops, restaurants), and institutions (i.e., hospitals and schools) but does not include construction/demolition debris, automobile scrap or medical/ pathological waste (Chandler et al., 1997). Meanwhile, the sustainable solid waste management (SWM) practices can be described as managing waste today without compromising the prospects of future generations by maximizing the recovery of resources from the waste stream. Sustainability should be the fundamental component in contemporary MSWM decision making (Hacer & Braida, 2015).

Based on the press statement made in The Star dated 9 September 2018 by the Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin, one of the biggest challenges in major cities of developing countries is waste management. With a population of over 32 million, Malaysia generates about 38,000 metric tonnes of waste on a daily basis. Out of the huge amount, waste separation and recycle rate is only at 24%, while the remaining 76% goes to the landfill. Further, as reported by The Star dated 13 February 2019, Malaysia has become the "world's rubbish bin" and this was a powerful statement made by Greenpeace Malaysia in 2018, when it was reported that the country had taken in 754,000 tonnes of plastic waste from over 19 countries that year which equivalent to the weight of 100,000 large elephants. This reeked of bad news, especially for Jenjarom, a town located in the Kuala Langat District, that is now smothered in 17,000 tonnes (17mil kg) of waste, according to the BBC.

In addition, Kawai and Tasaki (2016) reveal that MSW generation per capita among Malaysian citizen is on average of 0.9 kilogram per day. This statistic shows that Malaysia is the among top three countries in term of waste generation in East Asia after Singapore (0.94kg) and Brunei Darussalam (1.40 kg). In terms of MSW generation per capita of 20 major municipalities in Asia and South Africa, Kuala Lumpur (1.62) is ranked at the first place, followed by Bangkok (1.50). The authors also find that each municipal value exceeds the corresponding national value for MSW generation per capita and comments that urbanization has a positive effect on increasing MSW generation per capita, especially in developing countries, where disparities in economic activities and living standards between rural and urban areas are large. MSW per capita in urban municipalities has been reported to be more than that in rural municipalities in developing countries.

Thus, based on the alarming issue on solid waste management, it is timely for researchers to conduct this study with aim to explore the waste management prtices of E-Idaman. E-Idaman Sdn. Bhd. (EISB), which is jointly owned by Metacorp Berhad and Cenviro Sdn. Bhd. to undertake the waste management business in the Northern region of Peninsular Malaysia namely Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak. It is hoped the findings from this study will benchmark the effectiveness of the SWPCMC Act 2007 in dealing with waste management focusing in Kedah environment. Furthermore, this study may provide an insight to evaluate the successful of SDG 11 implementation by Malaysian government in making cities and communities development sustainable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

A considerable number of research have been conducted to investigate the solid waste management from various perspectives globally. For example, Baaki, Baharum and Ali (2019) explored how a performance assessment framework for safe and sustainable health-care waste management (SSHCWM) can be used to evaluate the implementation of sustainable waste management activities in health-care facilities. They identified some factors such as regulation, policies and technical guidance; behaviour change; perceptions, roles and interactions of stakeholder networks; training and education; budget; implementing EMSs; implementing lifecycle waste management; implementing waste management hierarchy as a potential of critical success factors. C, Patil, K.T., and Prakash (2018) formulated frameworks for the drivers and barriers of integrated sustainable solid waste management (ISSWM) in India. They found institutional effectiveness and the robust policy and frameworks are the most driving power. In contrast, poor social values and ethics, huge population and illiteracy are the three most critical barriers faced by developing nations in achieving the sustainability practices in the solid waste management. Further, Mwanza, Mbohwa and Telukdarie (2018) reviewed the municipal solid wastes (MSWs) management system, from an engineering management (EM) perspective, for the City of Kitwe, Zambia. The research findings indicated that the existing MSW system for the city is highly unsustainable and lacks EM methodologies. There are still several challenges in the management of MSWs which include: lack of proper

collection and storage of MSWs; lack of an engineered landfill; lack of waste recovery and treatment systems; and lack of public education aimed at reducing and separating MSWs.

In a different setting, Ofori and Mensah (2021) analysed the factors that promote pro-environmental intentions and sustainable electronic waste management among households in Ghana. They found that environmental values were the major influencer of pro-environmental intentions. Further results showed that sustainable e-waste management is mainly influenced by perceived behavioural control followed by pro-environmental intentions. Singh and Sushil (2021) identified the linkages of sustainability, which helps to capture the existing waste management practice in sustainable organizations. They found that the social image of an organization as a sustainable organization is the effect of its governmental directives, followed by the organization. The governmental directives are the most influencing dimension, and waste management efficiency and energy consumption are the most related dimension of sustainability in the organization. To increase its customer satisfaction, profit share and market value, these factors must be considered as vital factors of organization's sustainable performance.

In 2007, Malaysian Government has gazetted the Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation Act 2007 (SWPCMC Act 2007). This Act regulates the management of controlled solid waste and public cleansing for the purpose of maintaining proper sanitation. Furthermore, the Government also introduced Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) 11 with a goal to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. One of the ways of making cities and human settlement sustainable is by having an effective SWM practice. For the states that adopted the SWPCMC Act 2007 (Act 672), a total of 3,108.9 thousand tonnes of solid wastes was produced in 2019 as compared to 3,098.7 thousand tonnes in 2018. In line with the National Solid Waste Management Policy 2016 that has targeted national recycling rate of 22.0 per cent in 2020, Malaysia's recycling rate in 2019 has exceeded the set target that is 28.1 per cent. In Asia region, South Korea and Singapore recorded recycling rate of 53.7 per cent and 34.0 per cent respectively (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).

As a result of increasing rate of waste generation and population growth, land area has become more demanding causing the increment of the cost in solid waste management. Due to that, solid waste management will become more expensive in the future as it is reported that local government has provided a large amount of financial provision for solid waste management which more than 50% of their annual budget. The increase of cost in managing solid waste is due to inefficient and ineffective solid waste management in Malaysia specifically the urban area.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic hits the world and have major impact to various countries and organisations. Living in a new normal could be challenging and changing the business model and processes. Marques, Serrasqueiro and Nogueira (2021) analyse the literature on the topics of Covid-19 and the sustainability. The results indicate a high number of publications in the social dimension, with a relevant proportion of studies in the health sector. In national health systems, monitoring, innovating in human resource management and investing in information technology can ensure organizations' reliability and sustainability. Valizadeh, Mozafari and Hafezalkotob (2021) suggest the Covid-19 crisis has added a large amount of waste to urban waste, including infectious waste such as personal protective equipment and used equipment for patients. The results show that contractors were able to reduce total costs by establishing a coalition and sharing their capacities. In fact, the synergy of cooperation between them creates incentives for contractors to organize large coalitions.

Brohan et al. (2021) investigated the environmental consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, focusing on the effect of COVID-19 on municipal solid waste (MSW). The data on domestic waste collection were collected from the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleaning Corporation (SWCorp) from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. The results indicated that the enforcement of the early MCO showed a positive effect by decreasing the volume of MSW. However, the amount of MSW began to increase again when the MCO reached the conditional and recovery stages. While the pandemic was still spreading, the local governments and waste management companies had to quickly alter their waste management systems and procedures. Similarly, Ismail et al. (2020) also found the similar decreasing trend of food waste generation during MCO in Selangor. The findings give contribution of knowledge in the quantification and analysis of food waste drivers in Malaysia. Additional considerations should be rendered in the field, for example, industrial activities, weather conditions, biomass burning, and traffic density.

2.1 Solid waste management

Malaysia has experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization over the last few decades. This situation has increased the generation and changes the characteristics of MSW. The fundamental aspect that needs to be considered in designing a sustainable MSW management system is the availability of information on the characteristics of waste generate. Solid wastes management in Malaysia are categorized into three categories namely municipal solid waste management, scheduled waste management and clinical waste management. Each category is under different government agencies. For example, Ministry of Housing and Local Government takes the responsibility to supervise municipal solid waste management; Department of Environment manages the scheduled waste generation and disposal matters; and Ministry of Health control clinical waste management.

The elements of solid waste management can be classified into waste generation, dumping waste, collection and transportation, reduction, reuse, recycling, recovery / composting, landfill site selection and landfill. Sustainable municipal solid waste management practices deal with waste reduction and waste separation practices as the most preferred elements in the waste hierarchy (EPA South Australia, 2014; Sustainable Facility Tools, 2014;) Sustainable municipal solid waste management practices involve decisions at strategic, tactical, and operational levels. Considerations include selection of waste treatment sites and landfills capacity expansion strategies for allocating trans-formation facilities and landfills service zoning, and the need for collection days in each zone and for each type of waste.

Sustainability of the municipal solid waste management practices can be achieved if it is appropriate to the local conditions and can continue in the long term by using the human, financial and material resources available in the area. It should also be environmentally sustainable in that it minimizes the use of non-renewable natural resources (such as oil) and does not lead to long-term environmental problems that will be left for later generations to address. Effective management of municipal solid waste has become environmentally and economically mandatory due to the increase of environmental problems. In this context, the evaluation of economic aspects is imperative since the implementation of a municipal solid waste management system relates to considerable investment and operating costs.

In Malaysia, municipal solid waste management used to be under the responsibility of different local authorities (Local Governments) which clearly stated in Section 72 of the Local Government Act 1976 (Abd Manaf et al., 2009). Under provision of LGA 1976, local authority was responsible to provide services including directly or through contract public cleansing to all urban and semi urban communities under its jurisdiction, municipal solid waste should be disposed in sanitary manner. However, revenue of local authorities was facing deficit due to high operation cost associated with waste collection and transportation. Abas and Wee (2014) reported that local government has provided a large amount of financial provision for municipal solid waste management which more than 50% of their annual budget Although 50% of the operating cost was spent for the solid waste management, only 76% of the generated wastes were collected. This phenomenon exists due to inefficient and ineffective municipal solid waste management in Malaysia specifically the urban area.

Zainua & Songip (2017) reported that according to previous Malaysia's Director General of National Solid Waste Management Department, 40% - 80% of local authority's expenditures are on managing municipal waste and public cleansing. The cost of Municipal Solid Waste Management (MSWM) services per premise is around RM15.00 and the privatisation of the MWM had cost the Malaysian Government more than RM300 million. In order to reduce the burden of local authorities, solid waste services were privatized in year 1996. There are three solid waste concessionaires which have their own operating zone namely Idaman Bersih Pte. Ltd. for northern regions, Alam Flora Pte.Ltd. for central regions and Southern Waste Management for southern regions. However, local authorities are still having their responsibility in monitoring the cleanliness for amend under their jurisdiction.

Further, as an action to minimize high cost of MSWM, the Malaysian government has launched several recycling campaigns in the year 2000s to involve the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and community groups as well as the launch of an extensive public education and publicity campaign. The government had been implementing various strategies in solid waste management system to encourage public to participate in 4R (reduce, reuse, recovery and recycle) programs but the results have been disappointing. The government had targeted to increase the rate of recycling over the year to 22% by the year 2020, to achieve higher recycling percentage and lesser waste to be sent to landfills for disposal. Unfortunately, the campaign received only a warm response from the public. The overall failure of the campaign has been succinctly noted by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, in which he mentioned that after more than two years of recycling campaigns, only 2%

of waste is recycled while it will take only nine and a half days to fill the Petronas Twin Towers with garbage (Omran et al., 2009).

Permana, Towolioe, Abd. Aziz & Siong Ho (2015) revealed that the presence of community practices on waste reduction and waste separation was strongly correlated to a sense of cleanliness in the community. This result implicitly indicates that by using positive environmental image and performance within a locality, the community can become enthusiastically involved and push for sustainable SWM practices. They suggested that waste reduction and waste separation are two preferred practices in sustainable solid waste management (SSWM). These two methods are seemingly impossible to implement without high awareness within the communities as well as a strong commitment and support from the city authorities (Permana, et al., 2015). Thus, public awareness is a vital in promoting the successful of sustainable solid waste management.

2.2 Advantages of sustainable solid waste management practices

To extend, annual waste generation in Malaysia has reached 33,000 tonnes/day or about 12 million tonnes per year with more complicated compositions principally with organic waste (55%), paper (13%) and plastic (19%). So far, about 95% of the waste collected (which is 75% of waste generated) was landfilled (Agamuthu and Fauziah, 2011). Current disposal method of landfilling needs improvements to prolong the landfill life and to minimize the problem of land scarcity. Approximately 76% of the total MSW generated in the country is collected, where 2.0% is recycled while the remaining MSW are sent to the 144 disposal sites throughout the country.

Even with the difficulty in searching for suitable sites for landfills, they still remain as the main waste disposal option due to the lower cost of operation at only RM35/tonnes, as compared to RM500/tonnes for incineration and RM216/tonnes for composting. The annual increase of MSW was that a fast and a long-term solution must be implemented immediately to prevent more detrimental effects to the environment.

Malaysian Federal Government had established two new agencies under Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act 2007. National Solid Waste Management Department was set up as a policy making and regulatory body to supervise solid waste services based on local administration boundary. Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation was established to complement and ensure the successful implementation of the national solid waste management policy. In general, the policy aims to provide a comprehensive, integrated, cost-effective, and sustainable solid waste management system in line with society's demand for environmental conservation and public well-being (Abd Manaf et al., 2009).

Although new municipal solid waste management structure was in place, illegal solid waste disposal and environmental pollution could not be addressed effectively (Moh & Abd Manaf., 2014). There is a lack of enforcement capacity by National Solid Waste Management Department. Moreover, coverage of the municipal solid waste services in Malaysia is still not sufficient especially in rural area which cause illegal disposal activities such as open-air burning, open dumping and disposal by dumping into river (Moh & Abd Manaf, 2014). To overcome this issue, a better MSW management system which takes into consideration waste compositions, separation, recycling, and public awareness are essentially required.

In order to achieve an efficient and sustainable municipal solid waste management practices in a developing country like Malaysia, alternative options including material recovery, composting and thermal treatment could be implemented. Besides the improvement in the environmental quality, the implementation of an integrated waste management would also contribute to economic perspective. However, a specific improvement tool involving public participation is necessary in order to ensure that an appropriate MSW management system can be implemented.

3. METHODOLOGY

Several methods were utilised for data collection, including interview. An interview was conducted with representatives from E-Idaman on 24 January 2022 at Wisma Idaman, Alor Setar, Kedah. The interviewees were Mr. Munir Amani Dasheer (Head of Division for Operation) and Mr. Ahmad Sharafi Mohd Saad (Head of Green Resource Recovery Sdn Bhd- GRRSB). The aims of the interview were to get input from the respondents about the solid waste management practices of E-Idaman. In addition, a site visit was conducted to Rimba Mas Sanitary Landfill located in Perlis on 14 February 2022. This landfill is one of the landfills monitored by SWCorp. Starting from November 2021, Umpan Jaya Sdn Bhd secured the concession to manage the Rimba Mas Sanitary Landfill.

During the site visit, Mr Muhammad Shukor Abdul Halim, the Director of Umpan Jaya and his staff provide assistance for the site visit and briefing about the operation of the landfill.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

E-Idaman Sdn. Bhd. (E-Idaman) is a jointly owned by Metacorp Berhad and Cenviro Sdn. Bhd. to undertake the waste management business in the Northern region of Peninsular Malaysia namely Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak. In 2004, E-Idaman formed Environment Idaman Sdn. Bhd. (ENVI) to undertake the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Management concession by the Federal Government and subsequently formed Green Resource Recovery Sdn. Bhd. (GRRSB) in 2015, to tap into the non-concession area of businesses such as recycling, composting and landfill management. As a concession company, E-Idaman delivers the best environmental services to meet society's growing needs. To date, E-Idaman has successfully operated in the state of Perlis and Kedah, covering 13 local authorities of more than 300,000 premises, with 6,000 workers. Collaboration with 3 local authorities in Perak is also on going to further expand our operations.

Solid waste generation in Malaysia largely contributed 65% by household, 28% by industry and 7% by commercial and institutional (Department of Statistics in Malaysia, 2020). Waste is divided into wet and dry waste. In Kedah, waste dispose is around 1400 or 1600 tonne per day. Domestic waste about 60% which are the highest waste disposal. Another 40% are green waste which consists of barks, trees, leaves, etc. Figure 1 shows the distribution of Kedah/Perlis – Household Waste Composition 2017.

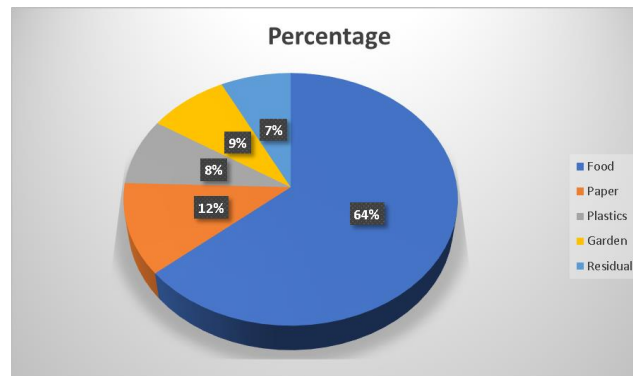


Fig. 1: Household Waste Composition of Kedah and Perlis 2017 (1450 Tonne /Day)

The elements of solid waste management in Malaysia are divided into two (2) parts, which are government concession and non-concession. Government Concession is awarded by the Federal Government to undertake the waste collection and public cleansing management services for the Northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Currently operating in the states of Kedah and Perlis. Under solid waste collection, E-Idaman Sdn. Bhd. via its subsidiary Environment Idaman provides innovative waste collection and disposal services for municipal wastes under the Government's concession, focusing on creating a sustainable environment to meet the demand of growing population. To date, E-Idaman manages the operations in the state of Perlis and Kedah, covering 13 local authorities of more than 300,000 premises, with 6,000 committed employees and fleet of over 300 vehicles. E-Idaman caters a comprehensive solid waste solution that includes: (1) Domestic waste, (2) Recyclable waste, (3) Green waste and (4) Bulky waste. Another government concession offered by E-Idaman is the public cleansing management. Services include under this are: (1) Road Sweeping, (2) Grass Cutting, (3) Drain cleaning, (4) Public toilets cleaning, (5) Dry & wet markets cleaning and (6) Beach cleaning.

Non-concession is run by GRRSB, that provides services which are not covered under the government's concession in delivering a sustainable and holistic approach of integrated waste management in Malaysia. Non-concession covers providing private waste collections to non-concession areas such as industrial parks, commercial and institution areas which are not bound to the government concession. It consists of garbage collection for industries which is known as Institution Commercial and Industry (ICI) where the industries need to pay for the services. This is the core income for E-Idaman. Another service offered is the private cleaning services which include grass cutting and drain cleaning at private residential areas and premise cleaning services. This is specifically done to cater the needs of growing demand from the public due to their strong support and trust on our service quality based on the current operation of government concession services.

Further, as an action to promote sustainable waste management, the Malaysian government has launched Sustainable Strategic Plan including smart partnership, waste to resources, facilities, sustainable program, technology and innovation and awareness program (5R). The smart partnership involves participation of waste management disposal company, non-governmental organisations (NGO), private sector, academic institutions and community groups. Through collaboration of E Idaman with NGO and private sectors such as Yayasan Sultanah Bahiyah, SwCorps and Ministry of Housing and Local Government, they are able to sale the recyclable items, create a donation channel and promote the sustainable waste activities to community groups. Communities are encouraged to recycle their waste instead of transfer to landfill. In order to increase the recycle activities by public, E Idaman has initiated 2-bins system, a system that each household is allocated with 2 bins for the purpose of segregating wet waste and dry waste. Further, E-Idaman also introduced drop off facility that operate at 15 local authorities in Kedah and 1 center in Perlis. In addition to drop off point, E Idaman also established Drive Through Recycle Center (DTRC) at Kangar and Kulim. The DTRC is a convenient drop off point for recyclable and financial incentives also given to individuals who return recyclables to the centers. Beside drop off their waste, communities also can sell their recycle items at moveable buy back centre (BBC) that use multi purpose truck that stationed at approved location.

Communities in Kedah and Perlis are also equipped with 1,501 recycle cage in Kedah and 168 cage Perlis, respectively. E-Idaman also established material recovery facility (MRF) that encourage, and ease recycle activities focusing on food waste such as Pusat Komuniti Lestari Taman Tunku Sarina, Jitra, Pusat Komuniti Taman Angsana, Kulim. Communities are free to drop off their food waste into self- service rubbish cage which will be recomposed as a fertilizer. This fertilizer will be used to fertilise community vegetable garden which is freely distribute to local communities. In addition to collaboration with NGO, private and communities, E Idaman also collaborate with academic institution such as Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Manjung and Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah to promote green campus zero waste initiative. The objectives of green campus zero waste are to promote sustainability in managing waste in the campus and to embed ownership of the area to the varsity community. Waste generation from eateries, cafeteria, offices and residential are separated and treated as source. Using integrated facilities, the green waste is composted for landscaping. Other recyclables used cooking oils and e-waste are transferred to MRF facility that transformed waste to baled products and sold to industrial buyers. Only the residual waste is transported to landfills for treatments.

Waste management has become an imperative given that most cities are running out of landfill sites. With increasingly limited land availability and the steady growth of cities, governments need to implement effective and sustainable waste management solutions including waste to energy technologies (WTE). For E Idaman, waste to resource plan only involve the recycle for life (RFL) program that promote waste separation and recycled activities for sustainable community. Food wastes and green wastes will be processed on site to be utilised by the premise while the recyclables, used cooking oil and e-waste will be collected and transported for further processing and to be sold to industrial buyer.

E-Idaman also equipped with facilities that able to enhance sustainability waste management as display in Figure 2 below. Among facilities possessed by E Idaman is multi resources collection vehicles (MRCV) is a four compartment trucks that cater for bulky waste, residue waste, food waste and recyclables. The use of MRVC will reduce time collection of waste as a single truck able to cater for all type of waste except for green waste. Meanwhile, the use of one-man operator side loader increases the waste tonnage from 8 tons to 14 tons per trip. Another advantage of single operator side loader is minimizing the number of worker and collection time from 2 minutes to 48 seconds to upload waste.



Fig. 2: Waste collection and transportation facilities

In order to enhance sustainable waste management, E Idaman adopted new technologies to monitor and to implement the effective waste management practices. E Idaman introduce E-Aduan system, Automatic Vehicle Locate System (AVLS), Mresponz, Geographical Information System (GIS) and drone technology. E-Aduan system that enable an efficient management of customers feedback (complaints, queries and compliments) and action taken starting from feedback receive until it is close. Figure 3 explain the flowchart of E Idaman online system (E- Aduan). The process begins with receive feedback from customer followed by verification of the feedback complaint, investigation and rectification by service department, closing the compliant and ended with corrective and preventive plan.

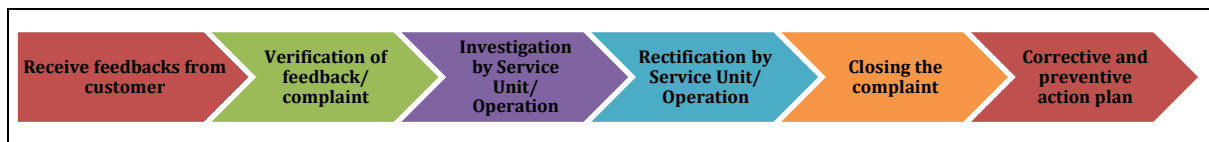


Fig. 3: Flowchart of E-Aduan

E- Idaman also digitalised waste collection management by adopting Automatic Vehicle Locate System (AVLS) an integrated system of GSM and GPS technology that work together in the form of digital and web-based fleet tracking system which gives real-time report from the ground operation to the management screen monitoring. This system is not only for precise fleet tracking, but it also provides vast information on the fleet activities for instance real-time alerts on any speeding, idling, power-cut, panic, ignition or hotspot event.



Fig 4: Automatic Vehicle Locate System (AVLS)

Similar to AVLS, E-Idaman also create MResponz a mobile application for Workforce Tracking and Response Management that compatible with all Android based smartphones and tablets with the intention to monitor the activities, locations and work progresses of the supervisors on the field for waste collection and public cleansing management services. Meanwhile the Geographical Information System (GIS) is an application of GIS that plays an important role in managing inventory data starting from preliminary data collection on the ground using the Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to data storing, analyzing and visualizing using map and inventory.

GIS also can be used in route optimization where the best and cost-effective route can be selected to increase operational performance and efficiency.



Fig. 5: MResponz mobile application



Fig. 6: Drone technology

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the practices of sustainable waste management conducted by E-Idaman. E-Idaman aspires to inculcate a sustainable and innovative approach in managing waste by introducing initiatives beyond business as usual, taking into consideration the symbiotic relations between the people, nature, and economy, and ultimately preserving the environment for the benefit of both the present and future generations. Its service units available in each district in Perlis, Kedah and Perak and act as our frontline that oversees the day-to-day operations. They are the champion in handling the basic operations, ad-hoc and event requirements for waste removal, public cleansing, and disposal within their respective operational areas. It is hoped the findings from this study provide indicator on the effectiveness of the SWPCMC Act 2007 in dealing with waste management focusing on Kedah environment. Furthermore, this study also may provide an insight to evaluate the successful of SDG 11 implementation by Malaysian government in making cities and communities development sustainable.

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Global Adoption of IPSAS: An Overview

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Abstract

Two decades ago, the IPSASB issued the accrual-basis IPSAS to be adopted worldwide. Only one-third of the countries around the world have adopted these standards until now. This reveals the importance of understanding in-depth the real reasons behind this lack of progress towards the full adoption of IPSAS globally. A deep understanding of this issue requires investigating it in the field. This paper aims to highlight the importance of employing the qualitative method in studying this issue. According to a review of the literature on IPSAS adoption, the quantitative method was used in the majority of earlier research. Although their findings are significant, our understanding of this issue is still unsaturated. This paper recommends conducting more qualitative studies in different contexts, which will assist in finding the appropriate solutions.

Keywords: IPSAS, IPSAS adoption, qualitative method

1. INTRODUCTION

The adoption of international standards and the entire topic of globalization are interwoven (Siaga, 2012). Globalization necessitates harmonization in all fields in order to reap many benefits for all. Accounting field is one of these fields. This harmonization is required not only among countries, but also among different sectors. Adoption of accrual-basis accounting standards in the private sector has been successful in producing high-quality information that assists in managing resources. The limitations of resources in our world, which are managed by the public sector, encouraged governments to imitate the private sector (Montes et al., 2019). However, the nature and goals of the two sectors differed, making it impossible to apply business accounting standards (IASs and IFRS) in the public sector (Kartiko et al., 2018). Thus, the IASB established the IPSASB to produce appropriate standards for the public sector based on IASs and IFRS (Al-Zubi, 2015). The IPSASB has been issuing the accrual-basis IPSAS since 2000 and recommends that they be adopted in all countries and jurisdictions around the world (Chan & Zhang, 2013).

The IPSASB sought to serve the public interest by releasing high-quality standards for the public sector to enhance the quality of its financial reporting and create high-quality financial information that enhances transparency, comparability, and accountability (IPSASB, 2021; Trang, 2012). The adoption of IPSAS is considered part of public sector reform. Literature also confirms that the adoption and implementation of IPSAS will achieve IPSASB's objectives, which will reflect in improved governance and better allocation of resources (Krah & Mertens, 2020). The use of IPSAS raises the quality of general financial reporting in the public sector, which improves comparability, boosts transparency and accountability, and allows for a better evaluation of resource allocation decisions made by governments (IFAC, 2021, pp. 3-16). High-quality financial information offers a solid foundation for decision-making, and improving accountability and transparency (Sour, 2012).

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Although the importance of the adoption of accrual-basis IPSAS and their benefits to the public sector globally are well known, the adoption progress is still very slow. After twenty-two years, only one-third of the world's countries had adopted accrual-basis IPSAS (IFAC, 2021). The other two-thirds of countries are still using cash-basis IPSAS, their national accounting standards, or traditional accounting. There are numerous reasons why the accrual-basis IPSAS has not been adopted. These challenges are different among countries. These challenges could be political, economic, technical, professional, social, or all of them. Studying one context of these challenges will not reflect the full picture and will not bring suitable solutions.

2. DISCUSSION

The solution to the lack of global progress in adopting IPSAS on an accrual basis needs to be aware of and understand all the challenges in each context. Understanding only a portion of difficulties will not help in overcoming the issue. Literature revealed many studies that studied the IPSAS adoption through employing the quantitative method. Most of them were based on one or more theories. To learn more about these theories, some academics reviewed the relevant literature (Polzer et al., 2021; Schmidhuber et al., 2022). Numerous academics have employed a variety of theories to explain the development of the accounting system toward accrual accounting in the public sector based on IPSAS. The factors impacting the adoption of IPSAS have primarily been described using the institutional theory and contingency model (Chan et al., 1996; Lüder, 2002). Many scholars suggest that the reform is modernizing the public sector and improving decision-making, transparency, and accountability by using the New Public Management paradigm to study the adoption and deployment of accrual-basis IPSAS (Gomes et al., 2015; Lüder, 2002).

The theories that were employed in researching the IPSAS adoption in less-advanced nations were examined by Polzer et al. (2021). Many databases were searched by employing the systematic approach. The institutional theory was most frequently employed, whereas the contingency theory has been applied less frequently. Their findings are shown in the following figure.:

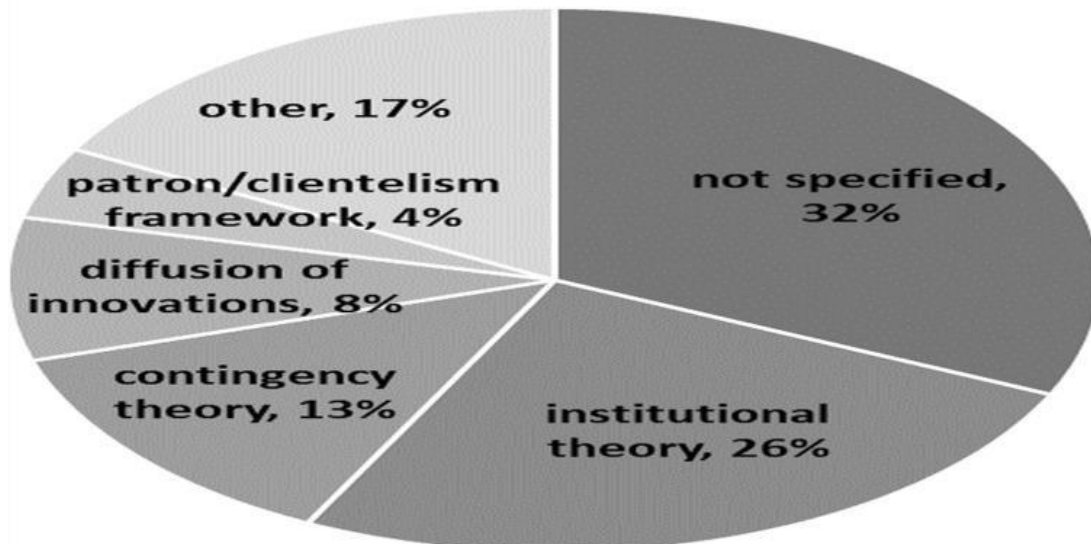


Fig. 1. Conceptual background of Polzer's study on theories used in IPSAS adoption studies.
Source: Polzer, et al. (2021)

Quantitative research methods are intended to address research questions that are addressed quantitatively using statistical data (Barnham, 2015). The fact that developing a numerical system to statistically compute and test a hypothesis requires a large amount of time is a key drawback of employing the quantitative research methods (Zikmund et al., 2012; Ramona, 2011). In order to do quantitative research, a hypothesis must be created and closed-ended questions must be used. The quantitative method, which relies on numbers, is more factual (Park & Park, 2016). In contrast to qualitative research methods, which focus on why or how, the quantitative research methods offer answers to what-questions.

The qualitative research method explores and investigates how or why something happened (Barnham, 2015). The qualitative research method is ideal for studying a phenomenon in its natural setting. Qualitative research has many different components, such as questions and methods, data collected in the participant's natural setting, looking at created data, and the researcher's understanding of the significance of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of qualitative research is to comprehend a complicated phenomenon better so that it may be researched and possibly developed into a theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In addition to the subjectivity of qualitative research, direct interaction between the researcher and the informants is required (Park & Park, 2016). Additionally, the data in qualitative research can be gathered by a variety of methods and from several sources, which increases the validity and reliability of the data (Creswell, 2014).

The most common methods for gathering data for qualitative research include participant observations, documents, and interviews (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In qualitative research, the researcher observes the participants' behaviors and interpretations in the field and relies on their unique perspectives and expertise (Creswell, 2014). Observation can be a valuable tool for data collection in management and business research, especially when combined with other tools (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 290). Interviews are employed to collect primary data through structured, semi-structured, and in-depth interviews. While secondary data are gathered through documents that enable triangulation of the data collected (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 328).

Studying the issue of the lack of progress in the adoption of IPSAS completely in the public sector indicates the complexity of this phenomenon. To find all of the reasons why this lack occurred, many instruments, such as observations, documents, and interviews, are required to be used to collect data that can answer the "why" question and deeply understand the phenomenon of IPSAS non-adoption. Furthermore, investigating all aspects of the adoption process necessitates research in its natural setting. Although the findings of quantitative studies are significant, the overall picture of IPSAS adoption in various contexts remains hazy. This haziness reflects the uncertainty, ambiguity, volatility, and complexity of the reasons behind this phenomenon. So, it will not be appropriate to study this phenomenon using the positivity paradigm, which is the foundation of quantitative research. Therefore, the most appropriate method to be used in studying the lackluster progress of IPSAS adoption is the qualitative research method.

3. CONCLUSION

The acceleration of the adoption of accrual-basis IPSAS globally needs to understand the challenges in different contexts deeply. The qualitative research method will be the most appropriate method to study this phenomenon because it presents the required in-depth understanding of the overall situation. This paper suggests conducting qualitative studies in various countries to gain a comprehensive picture of this phenomenon and speed up the global adoption of accrual-basis IPSAS.

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Achieving Quality Education through Service-Learning Activities

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Abstract

Studies show mismatches between educational outcomes and labour market needs. Employers value soft skills and work experience over academic and professional qualifications. Even graduates admit they lack the soft skills and work experience needed for a good job. Soft skills include strong work ethics, good communication skills, creative and analytical thinking, challenge-solving skills, teamwork, a positive attitude, learning from criticism, and working under pressure. Recognizing the importance of education, Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to provide quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. SDG 4 expects youth and adults to be able to acquire problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication, and conflict-resolution skills. Service-learning is one method for imparting to students the above skills. Research on how service-learning can improve accounting education is limited. Therefore, this study aims to gain insight into students' service-learning experiences. The study aimed to align service-learning with SDG 4 goals.

Keywords: Service-learning, quality education, Sustainable Development Goal 4

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an intergovernmental agreement that serves as a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are integrated and indivisible, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. Education is the key to achieving SDGs. People can break the cycle of poverty if they can get a good education. As a result, education aids in the reduction of inequalities and the attainment of gender equality. It also empowers people all over the world to live healthier, more sustainable lives. Education is also important for fostering interpersonal tolerance and contributing to more peaceful societies. In fact, education is linked to almost all of the other SDGs in one way or another.

Realising the importance of education, education is essentially articulated as a stand-alone goal i.e. SDG 4: Quality Education. SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. There are 10 targets under SDG 4, and target number four focuses on substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. The skills that the SDG expects youth and adult to acquire is beyond work-specific skills, which are problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills, and conflict resolution. One of the strategies to equip students with the above skills is using experiential learning, i.e. service-learning.

According to the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, service-learning is defined as a form of experiential learning that takes place through a life cycle of action and reflection when students apply what they have learned to fulfil the real needs of a community (Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia 2015-2025). Experiential learning has been proven as an effective teaching-and-learning approach because students have the chance to apply theoretical

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knowledge while engaging in service-learning projects (Najah Nadiah & Hamdi, 2017). In other words, service-learning provides opportunities for students to link course material with real-world experience.

The role of the universities in Malaysia is to prepare the youth for educational transformation through the higher learning education system, in parallel with the needs and challenges of the future. Through Malaysia Education Blue Print 2015-2025 (for Higher Education), the universities in Malaysia have been targeting to (i) produce holistic graduates who are entrepreneurial and balanced, (ii) improve students' learning experience, and (iii) expand collaboration between industries, government agencies and communities. Measures have been implemented in curriculum and academic programmes by increasing experiential learning and service-learning.

One of the schools at Universiti Utara Malaysia, Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy (TISSA-UUM), has integrated service-learning into the Management Accounting course. The goal of embedded service-learning at the TISSA-UUM programme is to serve as a learning strategy in which students must apply classroom knowledge to solving real-world problems or issues in a community. This will assist students in becoming active lifelong learners who recognise the broad social significance of the accounting profession. The value of accounting's profound impact on society at various levels cannot be realised without first understanding society and its complexities. This goal is consistent with SDG 4, which lists the expected required skills that each youth (in this case, graduates) must possess, which are problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills, and conflict resolution.

However, research on how service-learning could enhance students' learning skills specifically in accounting education is still limited. Therefore, this study is aimed to examine the students' learning experiences from the implementation of the service-learning activity. The study also aimed to provide recommendations to ensure the alignment of service-learning activity with the aims of SDG 4.

1.1 Problem statement

SDG 4: Quality Education refers to all aspects of school and its surrounding education community, the rights of the whole child, and all children, for survival, protection, development and participation at the learning center (Haron, Sajari, Ishak, 2021). In Malaysia, education is under the responsibility of the federal government and all educational matters are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Higher Learning (MOHE). Both ministries are expected to promote the teaching of soft skills, including 'learning to learn' skills, emphasize work-based learning to better match the supply of and demand for skills, incentivize employers to provide work-based learning, and widely publicize and support the use of the Critical Occupations List to identify & more effectively address skills shortages (Khazanah, 2018)

Integration of practical training experiences into the academic curriculum is one of the ways to achieve the desired outcome of quality education. Service-learning can fulfil this aim. Service-learning encourages students to be creative when applying their knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to resolve issues and challenges encountered in the community (Yusof et.al., 2020). In 2019, the MOHE has devised a set of national guidelines on service-learning implementation in Malaysian universities, which is known as 'SULAM' (Department of Higher Education, 2019).

Service-learning is also included in the curriculum at Universiti Utara Malaysia. Being an accounting school UUM, TISSA-UUM has implemented a service-learning project in the Management Accounting course. Since 2018, the course has included a service-learning project. The project requires students to identify any existing business and assist it with financial planning, such as budgeting, target sales and profit, and customer focus. In order to do so, students must apply and develop financial planning skills in the business. Students are expected to be able to apply all of the costing techniques covered in the prerequisite course to a service-learning project. Students are expected to understand and apply decision-making techniques related to profit planning in daily business processes by the end of the project.

However, no research on how service-learning projects could improve education quality, particularly in accounting education, has been conducted since. An overview of previous studies on service-learning suggests that the effects of service-learning implementation are currently limited, as most studies focused on measuring the effectiveness and learning outcomes of service-learning. Given the novelty of this practise in the Malaysian context, understanding the mechanics of its implementation in terms of the challenges and opportunities encountered by both lecturers and students is critical. Nonetheless, the literature on service-learning suggests that the key aspect of service-learning is the integration of community service into academic learning, whereby parallel

development and partnership between the community and the students occur in a natural ecosystem (Yusof et.al, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of service-learning

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes (Najah Nadiyah Amran & Hamdi Ishak, 2017; Arandi, Sugeng Utaya & Budijanto 2016). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) underlines the importance of active learning to enhance students' soft skills, particularly critical-thinking skills (AACSB, 2013).

Bringle and Clayton (2012) conclude that service-learning is an educational approach combining academic knowledge acquisition with civic engagement. Service-learning falls into the category of teaching and learning methods as it emphasizes real experience and involvement in the field to meet the needs of the community and at the same time students apply the theory of knowledge gained in the course (Aliyu Deba, A., Jabor, M. K., Sukri Saud, M., & Buntat, Y. 2015).

According to Kaye and Connolly (2013), there are five stages of service-learning. Even though each stage is referenced separately, they are linked together and often experienced simultaneously. Please refer to Figure 1 below.

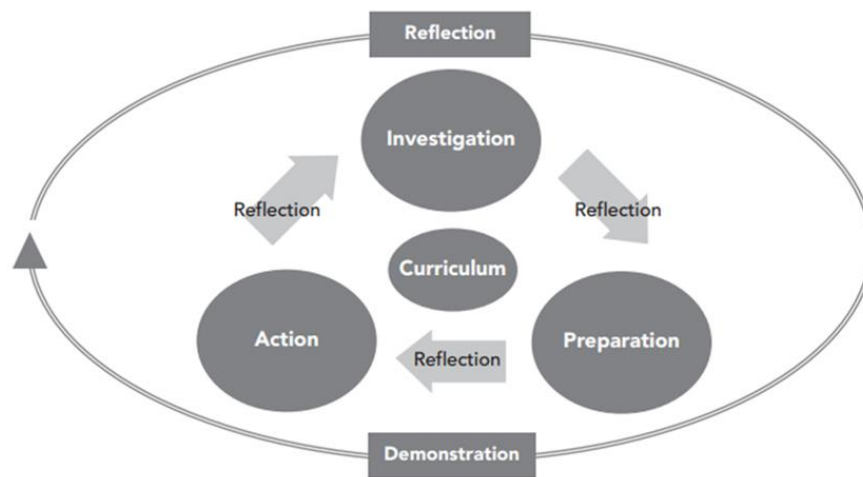


Fig. 1. Five Stages of Service-learning (Kaye & Connolly, 2013)

(i) Investigation:

Includes both the inventory of student interests, skills, and talents and the social analysis of the issue being addressed. This analysis requires gathering information about the identified need through action research that includes the use of varied approaches: media, interviews of experts, the survey of varied populations, and direct observation/personal experiences.

(ii) Preparation:

Includes the continued acquisition of knowledge that addresses any resultant questions from investigation along with academic content, identification of groups already working towards solutions, organization of a plan with clarification of roles, responsibilities and timelines, and ongoing development of any skills needed to successfully carry the plan to fruition.

(iii) Action:

Includes the implementation of the plan that usually takes the form of direct service, indirect service, advocacy, or research. Action is always planned with mutual agreement and respect with partners so these builds understanding and perspective of issues and how other people live.

(iv) Reflection:

Reflection is the connector between each stage of service and summative. Through reflection, students consider their thoughts and feelings (cognition and affect) regarding any overarching essential question or inquiry that is a driving force of the total experience. Reflection informs how the process develops, increases self-awareness, assists in developing the future, and employs varied multiple intelligences.

(v) Demonstration:

Student demonstration captures or contains the totality of the experience including what has been learned, the process of the learning, and the service or contribution accomplished. Beginning with the investigation, students document all parts of the process, resulting in a complete and comprehensive ability to tell the story of what took place during each stage that includes key informative reflection. Students draw upon their skills and talents in the manner of demonstration, often integrating technology.

2.2 Benefits of service-learning

The implementation of service-learning has brought numerous benefits to students. For example, there seems to be a positive change in students' attitudes and behavior toward learning after their involvement in service-learning (Chai, 2013; Gerholz, Liszt & Klingsieck, 2020). In addition, service-learning has increased students' involvement and awareness of civic engagement (Chai 2013; Sanders et al. 2016; Miftachul Huda et. al 2020; Gerholz, Liszt & Klingsieck 2020). A previous study by Gerholz, Liszt & Klingsieck (2018) shows that service-learning has an impact on the cognitive and personal development of students. The students perceived themselves as more self-efficacious and realized that their capabilities can make a valuable contribution to society.

Other studies identified a greater impact on students' social skills, particularly communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills (Chai 2013; Gerholz, Liszt & Klingsieck 2020). Service-learning also managed to facilitate students' academic achievement (Jackson et al. 2020). Black (2002) identified additional benefits of service-learning which include the development of self-esteem, personal efficacy and sense of responsibility, ethical/moral values, willingness to take risks and accept new challenges, higher critical thinking and decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

The aim of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' (AICPA) core competencies is to increase students' skill sets in meeting the needs of the profession. A service-learning project conducted by Edmond & Driskill (2019) shows that their goals of instilling the AICPA's core competencies and increasing the soft skills of the students were achieved, some of the skills and benefits developed or enhanced as a result of a service-learning project are teamwork, humility, selflessness, collaboration, leadership, unity, participation, approachability, budgeting, networking and communication skills (Edmond & Driskill, 2019).

A study by Maharam, Najah Nadiyah, Zainab, Maznah, Hamdi and Suria (2019) on the practice and implementation of service-learning in four public universities in Malaysia reveals various methods of implementation of service-learning have been practiced by public universities in Malaysia, such as learning through involvement in volunteer activities, problem-based learning, project-based learning, community case study, discipline-based project and Capstone Project. It is proven that service-learning has a positive impact on students' soft skills, value, and ethics and increase the students' experience and knowledge of the community. These impacts also benefited the educators, the university as well as community (Maharam, Najah Nadiyah, Zainab, Maznah, Hamdi & Suria, 2019).

After implementing service-learning for several years in auditing and governmental/nonprofit course, Still and Clayton (2004) concluded that service-learning is an important part of the accounting curriculum in their university. Students not only have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience but also have a chance to network with others in a professional setting. The utilization of service-learning in accounting programme has proven that service-learning has increased the students' understanding of the workings of different business environments such as non-profit organizations.

Besides auditing and non-profit course, service-learning has been introduced in Managerial Accounting courses. A study on a service-learning project developed in a Managerial Accounting course received positive feedback from the student (Lafond, Leaby & Wentzel, 2017). Apart from being able to enhance their understanding of cost-volume-profit analysis, the service-learning project has allowed them to connect with the community, especially with the less fortunate (Lafond, Leaby & Wentzel, 2017).

2.3 Sustainable development goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, actionable through the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a new, universal set of goals, targets, and indicators that United Nation member states will be expected to use to frame their agenda and political policies over the next 15 years (2016 – 2030). SDG consists of 17 Goals, 169 Targets and more than 200 Indicators that cover 5 dimensions namely People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership (UN, 2015). The list of 17 SDGs are SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 10: Reduced Inequality; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 14: Life Below Water; SDG 15: Life on Land; SDG 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions, and; SDG 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal.

In this study, the focus is on SDG 4: Quality of Education. The aims of SDG 4 are to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. SDG 4 is made up of 10 targets: free primary and secondary education; equal access to quality pre-primary education; affordable technical, vocational and higher education; increased number of people with relevant skills for financial success; elimination of all discrimination in education; universal literacy and numeracy; and education for sustainable development and global citizenship, build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools; expand higher education scholarships for developing countries; and increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries.

More specifically SDG 4, Target 4.3, focuses on higher education and explicitly indicates that by 2030, countries across the world should ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university (<https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/sdg-4/>). Such a target seeks to ensure that education at the higher education level is not only provided but is accessible and of the highest quality to both men and women. Therefore, combining the three aspects of sustainable development in higher education, teaching and learning should lead to quality outcomes. This situation shows the important role of higher education institutions, through their experience in teaching and learning for all levels of education, i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and executive training (Ferguson and Roofee, 2020). The higher education institutions' capacity-building and training are important in enhancing the capabilities of educators for the delivery of quality and inclusive curricula and the utilization of inclusive pedagogy.

3. CONCLUSION

The result of this study is expected to serve as guidance to lecturers, students, and schools to conduct service-learning activities in the best way to achieve the target of quality education. This study may heighten the awareness of lecturers in identifying the learning tasks that are well-developed as well as the least. This may further be a motivating factor to adopt measures and new strategies for the improvement of students' skills. The explanation of expected findings with reference to the Malaysian higher learning institution context is expected to be unique, thus, offering a novel understanding of service-learning activities by Malaysian higher learning institutions.

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Penggunaan Media Sosial dalam Meningkatkan Keterlibatan Pelajar dalam Pembelajaran Atas Talian

The Use of Social Media in Enhancing Student Engagement in Online Learning

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Abstrak

Penggunaan media sosial yang begitu meluas dan kemudahan akses sama ada daripada komputer mahupun telefon bimbit dalam era digital masa kini sedikit sebanyak telah mempengaruhi kehidupan seseorang pelajar. Semasa tempoh pergerakan kawalan pergerakan bagi mengekang wabak COVID-19 yang melanda negara sejak dua tahun lalu, aktiviti pembelajaran mula dijalankan secara dalam talian dan media sosial menjadi medan perhubungan di antara pelajar dengan pelajar dan juga pelajar dengan tenaga pengajar. Kajian lepas menunjukkan media sosial mempunyai kelebihan dalam proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran. Namun kajian untuk melihat sejauh mana penggunaan media sosial memberi kesan terhadap pelajar terutama dari segi keterlibatan pelajar dalam pembelajaran agak sukar didapati. Keterlibatan pelajar adalah satu aspek yang perlu diberikan perhatian kerana ia mempunyai kaitan dengan penerapan kemahiran insaniah seperti kemahiran berfikir secara kritis, kemahiran menyelesaikan masalah, kemahiran berkomunikasi, berinisiatif dan beretika. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendalami pengalaman para pelajar tentang pengalaman penggunaan media sosial dalam pembelajaran dan pengajaran dan kesan terhadap keterlibatan dari segi afektif, tingkah laku dan kognitif.

Kata kunci: Media sosial, keterlibatan, pembelajaran atas talian

Abstract

The widespread use of social media and the ease of access, whether from computers or mobile phones, in the current digital era have somewhat influenced the lives of students. During the period of movement control order to curb the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the country for the past two years, learning activities shifted to online platforms, and social media became a communication field among students, as well as between students and educators. Previous studies indicate that social media has advantages in the teaching and learning process. However, research on the extent to which the use of social media affects students, particularly in terms of their involvement in learning, is somewhat challenging to find. Student involvement is an aspect that requires attention because it is related to the cultivation of soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, communication skills, initiative, and ethics. In connection with this, the aim of this study is to delve into the experiences of students regarding the use of social media in teaching and learning and its effects on involvement in terms of affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects.

Keywords: social media, engagement, online learning

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1. PENGENALAN

Krisis global akibat penularan wabak COVID-19 yang bermula pada penghujung 2019 di negara China telah menyaksikan kesan yang begitu drastik terhadap landskap kehidupan seharian. Penularannya ke seluruh dunia telah mengakibatkan lebih dari 633 juta penduduk telah dijangkiti manakala hampir 6.6 juta penduduk di seluruh dunia telah terkorban akibat wabak ini (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, n.d.). Aktiviti harian tidak lagi seperti dahulu apabila kesemua sektor terkesan termasuklah sektor pendidikan. Pandemik COVID-19 telah mengubah keseluruhan program pendidikan di sekolah-sekolah mahupun di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi. Program pengajaran dan pembelajaran (P&P) berubah apabila semua kuliah fizikal terpaksa digantikan dengan kuliah atas talian (*online class*). Secara amnya, kuliah di universiti yang selalunya dihadiri ratusan pelajar dalam sesebuah dewan tidak dijalankan bagi mengekang wabak tersebut.

Perubahan ini memberi impak kepada keseluruhan pihak berkepentingan dalam pendidikan institusi pengajian tinggi termasuk pelajar, pensyarah, pengurusan, pentadbiran, dan badan-badan akreditasi. Setelah melebihi 2 tahun sejak bermulanya wabak COVID-19, pelbagai kaedah telah digunakan oleh tenaga pengajar dalam proses P&P kepada pelajar. Salah satu daripadanya ialah menggunakan media sosial sebagai medium pengajaran dalam P&P. Media sosial seperti Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Telegram dan Instagram merupakan medium yang sering digunakan dalam menyampaikan maklumat atau kandungan kepada para pelajar.

Kemahiran insaniah seperti kemahiran berfikir secara kritis, kemahiran menyelesaikan masalah, kemahiran berkomunikasi, berinisiatif dan beretika merupakan elemen yang sangat penting dalam menyediakan para pelajar menjadi pelajar yang holistik seimbang dari segi jasmani, emosi, rohani, intelek dan sosial. Bagi memastikan kemahiran insaniah ini dapat disemai dalam diri setiap pelajar, keterlibatan pelajar dalam pembelajaran sama ada di dalam kelas ataupun di luar kelas perlu diberikan perhatian (Hanita et al., 2018). Sungguhpun penggunaan secara meluas terhadap media sosial sebagai salah satu alat untuk berkomunikasi atas talian namun agak sukar untuk memastikan keterlibatan pelajar apabila tidak dapat bersemuka dan menilai keterlibatan mereka dalam pembelajaran dan pengajaran. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini akan cuba melihat bagaimana penggunaan media sosial mempengaruhi keterlibatan pelajar.

1.1 Pernyataan masalah

Pembelajaran atas talian merupakan salah satu penyelesaian bagi mengekang penularan COVID-19. Ini adalah kerana pembelajaran atas talian dapat mengurangkan interaksi pelajar di dalam kampus dan sekali gus menurunkan kadar jangkitan COVID-19 (Mukhopadhyay, 2020). Para pelajar masih terus dapat belajar dengan menggunakan pelbagai teknologi dan peranti digital yang menawarkan keupayaan capaian untuk pembelajaran atas talian. Selain itu, pembelajaran atas talian membolehkan para pelajar meneroka bidang-bidang ilmu yang lain di luar daripada kursus yang ditawarkan di universiti melalui pelbagai platform media sosial (Saykili, 2019). Sekiranya dilaksanakan secara betul, kesan pembelajaran atas talian berupaya memberi kesan yang sama dengan pembelajaran bersemuka.

Peralihan kepada pembelajaran atas talian telah menimbulkan kebimbangan di kalangan tenaga pengajar baik di sekolah mahupun di universiti. Antara isu yang sering diperdebatkan adalah capaian internet, peranti digital, akses data dan jurang digital (Trust, 2020). Di samping itu, pembelajaran atas talian juga menyekat interaksi sesama pelajar dan interaksi antara tenaga pengajar dan pelajar. "Ada soalan?", "Ada apa-apa yang anda ingin tanyakan?", "Apakah pendapat anda tentang apa yang kita bincangkan sebentar tadi". Ini adalah soalan-soalan biasa yang ditanya oleh tenaga pengajar dalam kelas sama ada kelas bersemuka atau dalam talian. Respons biasanya diterima dalam kelas atas talian adalah "Tidak" atau hanya senyap tanpa sebarang respons. Bagi memastikan pembelajaran atas talian adalah seiring dengan pembelajaran bersemuka, ia memerlukan penglibatan aktif semua pelajar. Penglibatan pelajar dapat dilihat daripada sejauh mana seseorang pelajar itu aktif dalam proses pembelajaran.

Struktur kursus Penghayatan Etika dan Peradaban memerlukan pelajar menyiapkan tugas berkumpulan yang melibatkan banyak perbincangan dan kerjasama dalam kalangan ahli kumpulan. Penyediaan tugas berkumpulan dan pembentangan secara berkumpulan, memerlukan penglibatan dan perbincangan yang kerap antara ahli kumpulan untuk menghasilkan output yang baik, yang memerlukan sumbangan idea daripada setiap ahli kumpulan serta input dari pensyarah. Namun semasa perintah kawalan pergerakan (PKP) dilaksanakan oleh kerajaan, agar sukar untuk pelajar berinteraksi secara bersemuka sesama mereka bagi menyiapkan tugas yang diberikan. Kekangan ini dijangka memberi kesan kepada keterlibatan pelajar dalam proses pembelajaran dan akhirnya laporan yang disiapkan kurang sempurna.

Dalam dunia digital, penggunaan media sosial merupakan perkara normal di kalangan masyarakat terutamanya di kalangan belia. Media sosial sering digunakan untuk berkomunikasi, informasi maklumat, hiburan dan lain-lain. Masa banyak dihabiskan dalam media sosial dan ini memberi kesan kepada proses

pembelajaran pelajar. Fenomena ini amat membimbangkan kerana penggunaan media sosial tanpa kawalan akan mengakibatkan kemerosotan prestasi akademik akibat kurangnya keterlibatan pelajar dalam pembelajaran. Oleh yang demikian, penyelidik berpendapat satu kajian diperlukan bagi mendapatkan gambaran sebenar tentang penggunaan media sosial di kalangan pelajar dan bagaimana penggunaan media sosial memberi kesan terhadap keterlibatan dalam pembelajaran.

2. SOROTAN LITERATUR

2.1 Media sosial

Media sosial merupakan teknologi berasaskan komputer yang memudahkan perkongsian idea, pemikiran, dan maklumat melalui pembinaan rangkaian maya dan komuniti. Dengan reka bentuk yang berasaskan Internet, media sosial berupaya memberi kandungan yang pantas kepada pengguna komunikasi elektronik. Kandungan ini merangkumi maklumat peribadi, dokumen, video, dan foto. Pengguna boleh berinteraksi dengan media sosial melalui komputer, tablet, atau telefon pintar melalui perisian atau aplikasi berasaskan web. Di antara media sosial yang paling popular sehingga bulan Julai 2022 ialah Facebook (2.93 billion), diikuti oleh YouTube (2.47 billion), WhatsApp (2 billion) dan Intagram (1.44 billion) (Chaffey, 2022).

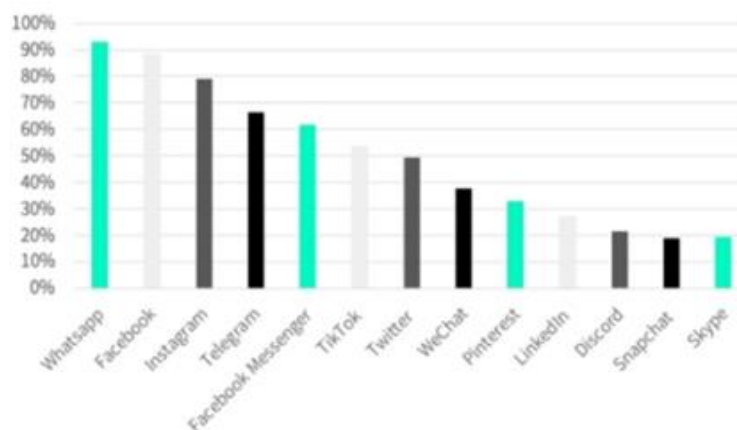
Dari segi sejarahnya, media sosial bermula seawal tahun 1985 iaitu melalui perkhidmatan dalam talian GENie. Kemudian pada tahun 1994 menyaksikan pengenalan The Palace. Ini membolehkan pengguna berinteraksi antara satu sama lain di pelayan ruang sembang grafik, yang mereka namakan sebagai istana. Seterusnya Facebook yang diperkenalkan pada tahun 2004 dan aplikasinya berkembang ke seluruh dunia pada tahun 2006. Sejak dari itu facebook merupakan satu media sosial yang paling ramai penggunaannya.

Dalam konteks P&P, semakin banyak universiti yang beralih menggunakan media sosial. Perkara ini berlaku hampir sedekad lamanya dan sejak bermulanya pandemik COVID-19, penggunaan media sosial semakin meluas. Menurut Seaman & Tinti- Kane (2013), bilangan fakulti yang aktif menggunakan media sosial telah meningkat menjadi hampir 30%, berbanding 10-12% pada tahun 2010.

2.2 Penggunaan media sosial

Penggunaan media sosial di Malaysia telah menyaksikan pertumbuhan yang luar biasa dengan peningkatan bilangan pengguna internet. Kini terdapat 29.55 juta pengguna internet di Malaysia pada Januari 2022 (Kemp, 2022). Kebanyakan rakyat Malaysia kerap menggunakan internet untuk membaca berita, mengikuti perkembangan terkini peristiwa semasa dan menggunakannya untuk terus berhubung dengan rakan melalui media sosial. Rakyat Malaysia yang telah berpindah ke negara lain untuk pendidikan, latihan dan kerjaya sentiasa berhubung dengan keluarga dan sahabat yang mendorong peningkatan penggunaan komuniti tidak formal seperti WhatsApp, Facebook dan Instagram. Trend ini telah berkembang lebih jauh dengan proses globalisasi yang mencetuskan rakyat Malaysia untuk menggunakan lebih banyak teknologi seperti telefon bimbit dan komputer.

Terdapat peningkatan penggunaan media sosial di Malaysia dari 2021 hingga 2022 dengan kadar peningkatan sebanyak 8%. Menurut Joyce (2022), hampir 90% penduduk Malaysia menggunakan media sosial setakat Januari 2022 berbanding hanya 62% penggunaan pada 2016. Daripada rajah di bawah, media sosial yang paling biasa digunakan ialah WhatsApp (93.2%) diikuti oleh Facebook (88.7%), Instagram (79.3%), Telegram, Facebook Messenger (62%), TikTok, Twitter, WeChat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Discord, Snapchat dan Skype (Rajah 1).



Rajah 1. Platform media sosial yang paling banyak digunakan di Malaysia Tahun 2022 (Digital Business Lab, 2022)

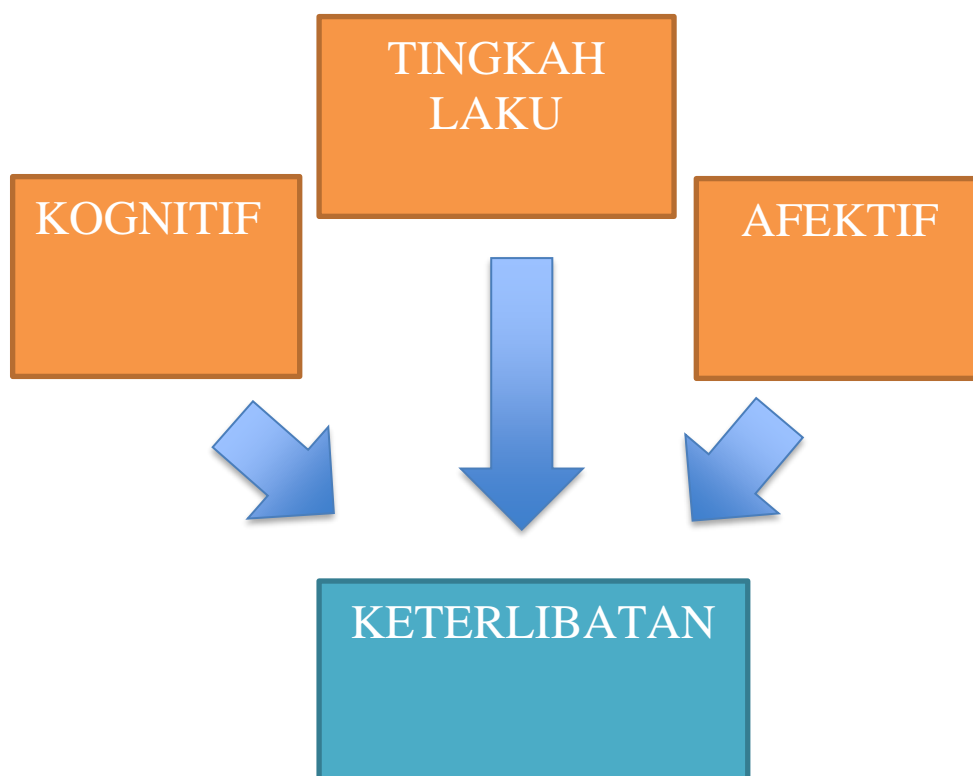
2.3 Keterlibatan pelajar

Keterlibatan pelajar boleh didefinisikan sebagai masa dan tenaga yang terlibat untuk tujuan pembelajaran. Ini merangkumi masa yang dihabiskan untuk berinteraksi dengan rakan sebaya dan tenaga pengajar selain melibatkan diri secara aktif dan berkolaboratif dalam aktiviti pembelajaran (Kuh et al., 2007). Di samping itu juga, keterlibatan pelajar yang aktif akan memberi impak kepada kemajuan akademik dan seterusnya akan lebih bersemangat untuk berjaya dalam pengajian yang diceburi berbanding dengan mereka yang kurang aktif (Kuh et al., 2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Menurut Kuh (2003), terdapat tiga aspek keterlibatan pelajar yang merangkumi aspek kognitif, afektif dan tingkah laku. Ketiga-tiga aspek ini merupakan kriteria penting yang saling berkaitan dengan keterlibatan pelajar (Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005). Keterlibatan pelajar boleh dinilai dengan mengambil kira ketiga-tiga aspek ini (Chapman, 2003).

Kriteria yang pertama iaitu kognitif adalah kriteria yang mengukur sejauh mana pelajar menggunakan keupayaan mental dalam menyempurnakan tugas yang diberi. Keterlibatan kognitif merujuk kepada strategi kognitif yang melibatkan intelek dan penguasaan pelajar dalam merancang, menilai kandungan yang dipelajari, memahami idea serta menguasai kemahiran yang kompleks. Pelajar yang menunjukkan kesediaan untuk menerima cabaran rasional ketika menyelesaikan masalah dan menilai pentingnya pembelajaran di sekolah akan membuat persediaan hidup untuk masa hadapan (Halimah et al. 2013; Zalizan et al. 2014; Anisa Saleha 2015; Hanita & Norzaini, 2018).

Kriteria yang kedua iaitu tingkah laku pula mengambil kira respons aktif pelajar terhadap tugas yang diberi. Menurut Christenson et al.(2012), keterlibatan tingkah laku merujuk kepada bagaimana pelajar terlibat dalam aktiviti pembelajaran dari segi perhatian, penyertaan, usaha dan ketekunan. Dengan kata lain, kriteria ini melihat tindak balas pelajar dalam sesuatu tugas.

Manakala kriteria afektif pula melibatkan reaksi emosi pelajar hasil daripada tugas yang dilakukan. Emosi merujuk kepada perasaan pelajar terhadap guru, rakan sebaya, aktiviti pembelajaran, dan pengalaman sekolah, serta rasa kekitaan mereka (Sinatra et al.,2015). Pelajar yang menunjukkan keterlibatan afektif tinggi akan merasa seronok belajar atau gembira untuk hadir ke sekolah (Halimah et al.2013; Zalizan et al. 2014; Hanita et al. 2018).



Rajah 2. Kriteria-kriteria keterlibatan. Sumber: <https://vcdresearch.blogspot.com/2019/05/week-8-understanding-engagement.html>

2.4 Sosial media dan pembelajaran

Pembelajaran secara atas talian telah wujud sejak sebelum bermulanya ancaman COVID-19 di samping pembelajaran secara bersemuka. Namun sejak COVID-19 melanda, pembelajaran secara atas talian telah dilaksanakan di semua sekolah dan pusat pendidikan bukan sahaja di Malaysia malah di seluruh dunia. Bagi memastikan kaedah pembelajaran dalam talian yang menarik serta berkesan, penggunaan media sosial banyak digunakan dalam memastikan pelajar dapat berinteraksi dengan lebih mudah samada interaksi dengan tenaga pengajar mahupun interaksi sesama pelajar. Menurut Hovorka dan Rees (2009), pengenalan media sosial ke dalam kursus bukan sahaja dapat menjadikannya lebih menarik dan menyeronokkan, tetapi pada masa yang sama mendidik pelajar mempelajari kemahiran tempat kerja yang berharga dengan lebih luas iaitu dari segi komunikasi, kolaborasi, komuniti, penumpuan, dan juga kreativiti.

Keterlibatan pelajar daripada penggunaan media sosial juga dapat dipertingkatkan apabila pelajar berpeluang bekerja dengan rakan sebaya, berkongsi idea dan sumber, dan melihat perspektif berbeza yang dibawa oleh rakan mereka ke kelas (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Keterlibatan pelajar di dalam proses pembelajaran amatlah penting khususnya dalam kerja kursus berkumpulan. Pemarkahan kerja kursus secara berkumpulan memerlukan percambahan idea yang kreatif dalam melaksanakan tugas dan ini memerlukan setiap ahli kumpulan menyumbang masa dan tenaga. Aktiviti sebegini memerlukan masa untuk berinteraksi dengan rakan kumpulan dan juga tenaga pengajar terutamanya dalam aktiviti pembelajaran aktif dan kolaboratif (Kuh, 2001a).

Kajian yang dilakukan oleh Laird & Kuh (2005) mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan positif antara penggunaan teknologi secara akademik dan berlakunya pembelajaran aktif dan kolaboratif, dan kekerapan interaksi pelajar-fakulti. Kedua-dua faedah ini dianggap menyumbang kepada tahap keterlibatan pelajar, yang telah ditentukan untuk memberi kesan yang besar kepada kejayaan pelajar (Kuh, 2001a, 2001b). Hasil kajian yang sama turut diperolehi oleh Rutherford (2010) di mana penemuan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat korelasi positif antara kekerapan penggunaan media sosial pelajar dan hubungan mereka dengan rakan sebaya dan pengajar serta persepsi mereka tentang keseluruhan kualiti pengajaran dan pembelajaran.

Aplikasi media sosial dalam bidang pendidikan memudahkan proses P&P kerana secara tidak langsung melibatkan komunikasi (Jamaludin & Sani, 2012). Pembelajaran yang menggunakan visual sebagai alat bantu pengajaran bukan sahaja dapat meningkatkan motivasi pelajar untuk belajar malah guru turut sama bermotivasi untuk mengajar (Shabiralyani, Hasan & Iqbal, 2015). Video pengajaran yang dihasilkan dan dimuatkan dalam media sosial mampu memberikan impak positif terhadap motivasi dan minat pelajar (Razali, Norman, Rahman, & Jamilluddin, 2017)

Raiyn (2016) dalam kajian perbandingan antara pembelajaran yang melibatkan visual dan pembelajaran tradisional mendapati bahawa pembelajaran yang mempunyai unsur visual interaktif memberikan impak dan kesan yang baik daripada sesi pembelajaran secara tradisional. Purata hasil kemahiran berfikir aras tinggi pelajar dalam pembelajaran visual menunjukkan keputusan yang tinggi berbanding pelajar yang belajar secara tradisional. Pandangan ini disokong oleh Shafie (2020) yang menyatakan bahawa video pengajaran mendorong pelajar lebih bersemangat dalam melakukan tugas yang diberikan, lebih kreatif dan mampu membuatkan pelajar berfikir di luar kotak.

3. KESIMPULAN

Seperti mana yang telah dibincangkan dalam bahagian sorotan literatur di atas, kajian penggunaan media sosial dalam pembelajaran mempunyai kesan positif terhadap pelajar. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian terperinci dan mendalam dengan kaedah kualitatif perlu dilakukan untuk mengkaji bagaimana penggunaan media sosial memberi kesan terhadap para pelajar. Persepsi para pelajar terhadap media sosial adalah penting kerana pandangan mereka akan mempengaruhi proses pembelajaran dan memberi kesan terhadap keterlibatan mereka dalam tugas berkumpulan.

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Listening to the Voices of Undergraduate Students: Exploring Astin's Theory of Student Involvement During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

As future scholars and holistic education practitioners, it is important to understand how developmental theories are constructed and how they can serve as a foundation for further understanding. The primary objective of this study is to discover how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected students' involvement both inside and outside of the classroom. Astin's Theory of Student Involvement was used to describe student involvement issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data for this study was gathered through a qualitative interview. Eight highly active undergraduate students were interviewed to know about their current life, whether in their involvement inside and outside of the classroom activities. Additionally, the impact of their student engagement, particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak, on their life development as individuals and university students is being investigated. The most immediate concerns among students were a loss of social connection, living conditions unsuitable for home office activities, such as inadequate data bandwidth, and a general lack of enthusiasm and concentration. As a result, the university must ensure that students have a reliable system in place for communicating with lecturers, club advisors, administrators, classmates, and peers. Maintaining a positive student-lecturer relationship, on the other hand, would surely increase academic performance and allow students to study more successfully.

Keywords: Astin's theory, student involvement, student voices, COVID-19, undergraduates

1. INTRODUCTION

Who would have thought that in the year 2020, the human race would be facing a global pandemic that could lead to millions of deaths until now? The World Health Organization (WHO) first announced that a novel coronavirus called COVID-19 was a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). Soon after, Malaysia implemented a 14-day Movement Control Order to curb the virus on March 18th, 2020 (New Straits Times, 2020). Since then, there have been several phases of lockdown in Malaysia due to the pandemic (Hashim et al., 2021). The global health, economic, and educational sectors have all been impacted by the pandemic. Higher education sectors, in particular, have been forced to shut down, and students have been required to return to their home countries or become trapped in host nations due to global travel restrictions (Times Higher Education, 2020).

Universities around the world must adapt to the pandemic where most of the staff need to work remotely and many classes are held online (Times Higher Education, 2020). Students were no longer exposed to the buzzing university cultural life and 'life on campus'. The sudden change in teaching-learning methods that need to be

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delivered online has made many lecturers and students' struggle. For example, lectures struggle to finish the curriculum as online teaching makes the learning slower, while the students are getting used to absent online classes, and most importantly, they could be falling behind because of a lack of internet access and technological devices that can aid their learning online (Schwartz, 2020). COVID-19 is still present on our planet at the end of 2021. That means students who were left behind because of the pandemic have lost nearly two years of education. Furthermore, a university is not just a place for education due to its unique ecosystem (Times Higher Education, 2020). It is also a place where university students, especially undergraduates, develop themselves as young adults. According to Sirotová (2015), students develop their personalities based on how lecturers provide the learning experience in class and at university in a large setting. The author describes how the learning experience in class, which is, of course, provided by the lecturer, can affect a student's way of thinking, emotions, and developing creativity. Nonetheless, activities outside the classroom (extracurricular) were perceived as the biggest influence in terms of developing students' personalities and soft skills (Yew, 2010). For example, students can participate in student club activities, become students' representatives, participate in interfaculty competitions, conferences, or charity events. Astin's theory of student development discusses how students' involvement in a university environment might help them develop their personalities (Astin, 1984).

Students' involvement in both academic and extracurricular activities is emphasised in the Astin theory. In a nutshell, the theory states that the more students who participate in university, the more likely they are to produce favourable outcomes, such as excellent academic performance, strong personalities, and skills (Astin, 1984). Aliu and Aigbavboa's (2021) study found that students' involvement in university, particularly extracurricular activities, helps to develop their personalities and enhance graduate employability.

Indeed, there are students who are now living on campus due to the recovery plan phases in Malaysia. Malaysian higher education has started to open to all students who wish to live on campus starting in October 2021 (Suhaidi, 2021). Nonetheless, the teaching-learning is still being done online. Therefore, all of the academic and extracurricular activities must be done virtually, although students can still experience "living on campus" and meet up with their friends. All these developments are because of the successful vaccination programmes. Specifically, in Malaysia, more than 80% of the adult population has been vaccinated, and most states in Malaysia are now facing the fourth phase of their recovery plan (Kaos Jr, 2020). Hence, all economic sectors that include education have been allowed to reopen as usual but with COVID-19 standard operating procedure (SOP). With this positive progress, we may be able to fully open the education sector starting early next year in 2022. Students and lecturers may commence physical teaching-learning experiences. Thus, the teaching-learning issues due to the pandemic context may disappear once the students are able to experience 'life on campus' fully.

Nonetheless, we are still facing COVID-19, and students have not been able to attend class physically since early 2020. Indeed, some students can live on campus starting in October 2021, as mentioned previously. However, not all students are able to come back to university for various reasons, and they must experience remote learning back at home. The research issue now becomes, "how do students engage in university while dealing with a remote learning situation at home?" Therefore, this research will shed light on how students can get involved with university activities while facing a remote learning situation. The research will examine how Astin's theory of student involvement may hold and help to describe students' involvement at university during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result, this study contributes to the literature in at least various ways, which are identifying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' involvement in and out of the classroom; exploring students' experience of engagement during the COVID-19 epidemic; exploring how the experience enhances or hinders their life development as individuals and university students; and using Astin's (1991) involvement development theory was used to describe their student involvement struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Section 2 of the literature review, the research report expands on how Astin's theory development may influence students' development. The research plan/design and data collection methods are presented in Section 3.0 of the methodology. The study's findings and discussion will be detailed in Sections 4.0 and 5.0, respectively. Finally, in Section 6.0, a summary of the study and its implications for practise will be discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Astin's student involvement theory emphasises the importance of student investment of physical and psychological energy at a higher education level to student development and learning (Astin, 1984). Astin (1984) suggested that the amount of student learning and personal development is directly related to the quality and quantity of student participation; the more academically involved students are in the life of the institution, the more likely they are to continue. A highly involved student, is one who invests a significant amount of time in learning, spends a significant amount of time on campus life, is active in student groups, and communicates often with the instructors and other students (Astin, 1999). According to Astin (1993) and Strayhorn (2008), active learning in the classroom, such as making presentations, taking essay tests, and working on independent research projects, has been demonstrated to have considerable favourable impacts on student retention and personal/social learning outcomes. The study added that peer connection and interactions with school administrators were also found to have a good impact on students' social and personal learning achievements (Astin, 1991). Thus, effective interaction appears to be an important factor in engaging students in order to increase learning and establish a link between engagement and student achievement.

This study will use Astin's (1991) *Inputs-Environments-Outcomes* (I-E-O) conceptual model (see Figure 1). This concept was chosen because it allows exploring the effects of the university environment on student educational outcomes while observing the student's background characteristics or growth (Astin, 1984; Astin, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Among others, the demographic background, characteristics, academic and test scores, talents, skills, goals, and other potential for growth and learning of a student when he or she first enters a college or university are all considered student inputs in the model (Astin, 1991; Lundberg, et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2008; Popkess, 2010). In addition, the environment refers to the college or university setting in which students are involved through interaction with peers, faculty management members, classroom participation, and other educational or curriculum programmes (Astin, 1991; Strayhorn, 2008; Popkess, 2010; Raia, 2012). It can also be treated as a student's actual educational experiences, practices, programmes, or interventions (Astin, 1991). The student's behaviour changes as a result of exposure to the environment over time, and these changes are referred to as outcomes. Cognitive, psychosocial, personal/social, cognitive psychological, cognitive behavioural, and affective psychological outcomes are among the types of student outcomes (Astin, 1991; Popkess, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008).

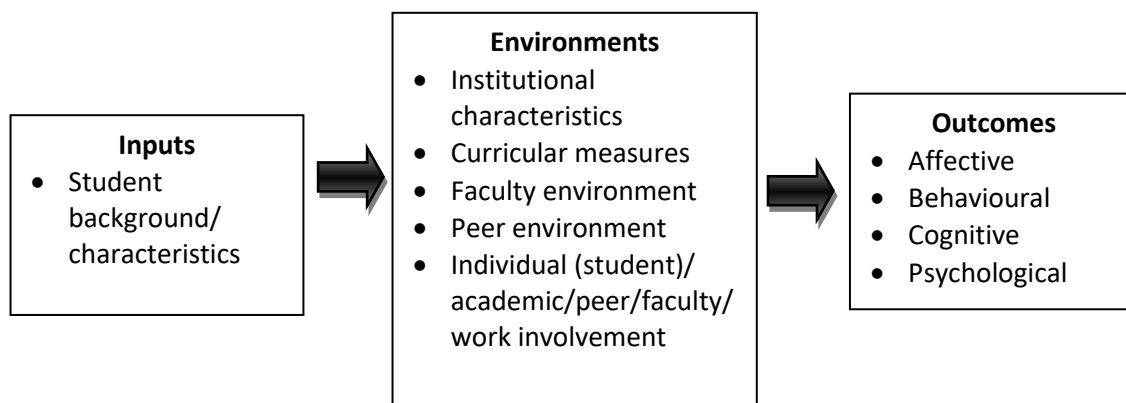


Fig. 1: Astin's Theory of Involvement: Inputs-Environments-Outcomes (IOE) Model (Astin, 1991)

As affirmed by Astin (1984) and Kahu (2013), learning success is determined by students' participation in learning as well as includes online learning (Akbari et al., 2016; Farrell & Brunton, 2020). Thus, this I-E-O model helps higher education professionals understand how specific interventions, such as academic advising or the university eco-system of learning, affect learners' outcomes like grades, satisfaction, and development. Furthermore, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that Astin's concept of involvement balances the responsibilities of institutional environment and active student engagement in promoting student development. Research reveals that one's interactions with the environment have an effect on behaviour (Barker, 1968) and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which in turn has an impact on the final achievement outcome.

Existing studies that analyse student involvement using the I-E-O model under the disruption of COVID-19 are more focused on social, cognitive, behavioural, collaborative, and emotional engagement¹ introduced in an online accounting module, it was beneficial in improving their learning experience (Malan, 2020). In addition, Perez (2020) and Colclasure et al. (2021) conducted research on the effects of mental health on student involvement on campus. On the other hand, Comeaux & Harrision (2007), Cole (2007), Hu (2010), Ahmad, Anantharaman & Ismail (2012), Hu & McCormick (2012), and Kim and Kutscher (2021) also conducted studies analysing student involvement on campus during non-epidemic periods using Astin's I-E-O framework.

Based on the above studies, most of them using quantitative analyses, while qualitative research work, particularly comparison studies on inside and outside classroom students' involvement, almost non-exists. The most common function of qualitative research is to understand the how and why of an experience, and it adds humanistic value to a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the earlier studies omitted the change in the university environment in outlining students' current life struggles during this COVI-19 pandemic. Thus, this study aims to address these gaps by concentrating on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and online learning to provide a new dimension for student academic performance. In addition, the comparison studies between student involvement inside and outside of the classroom are explored. Not only that, but this study also aims to address these gaps in student involvement theory by using the I-E-O model.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study sought to answer the following research questions: (1) How do students struggle inside and outside of the classroom during this COVID-19 pandemic? (2) In what ways do these experiences help or hinder their development as university students? (3) How can the university eco-system of learning further enhance these learners' development?

3.1 Research design

To answer these research questions, data collection took place via qualitative in-depth interviews to enable the researcher to identify and explore the students' characteristics, the challenges they faced with remote learning, and how these challenges affected their development as students. The purpose of the investigation was to establish the effect of the pandemic on student development and to suggest ways the university could play an active role in making things better for students in these trying times. To achieve this, the researchers interviewed the respondents through the Microsoft Teams Meeting Platform, which was conducted on 9th November 2021 at 8.30 pm until 10.00 pm. The interview questions were based on the academic literature, and participants were asked to give their perspectives on their campus participation experiences through open-ended questions. The details of the research plan could be summarised as below:

- 1- Interviewee: Eight (8) undergraduate students from various courses in the undergraduate programmes were interviewed. The profiles of interviewees are outlined in Table 1.
- 2- Interviewee selection: A group of potential active students (ranging from semester 3 to 7) are selected. They hold positions in various college and university-level programs.
- 3- An interview protocol was outlined in Appendix A.

Table 1. Profiles of Interviewees

Name of student	Course/Semester	Position in Student's Club
Student 1	Bachelor of Accounting/ Sem 5	President
Student 2	Bachelor of Tourism Management/ Sem 7	Secretary
Student 3	Bachelor of Accounting/ Sem 7	President
Student 4	Bachelor of Tourism Management/ Sem 7	President
Student 5	Bachelor of Business Management/ Sem 9	Member
Student 6	Bachelor of Business Management/ Sem 9	Vice President
Student 7	Bachelor of Communication/ Sem 3	President
Student 8	Bachelor of Communication/ Sem 5	Treasurer

¹ Redmond et al. (2018) engagement framework.

3.2 Data analysis

The recorded video of the interview session was first transcribed and then analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis organises and describes the data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher followed iterative coding process by O’Dwyer (2004) and Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014) where they suggested the qualitative data analysis embraces three linked subprocess which are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, which O’Dwyer (2004) refers to as data interpretation. After all interviews, transcriptions were uploaded into the Atlas.ti software to aid coding process. Deductive coding was utilized where preliminary codes was created from research questions and sub codes are then added into the main category until all relevant statements in the transcripts are covered. Table 2 below shows the sample of how transcripts were coded into the category pertaining to research question 1.

Table 2. Sample of category 1 - RQ1

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STUDENTS INVOLVMENT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CLASSROOM: RESEARCH QUESTION 1	
<p>Inside Classroom Category: Impact Sub-category: Inside Classroom Code: IMPACT: IN</p> <p><i>“Honestly speaking, I am one of the students who always focused in the class and jot down every single thing. I will make sure to stay consistent during a class and get things done properly. But after pandemic, online classes do not really give me the same degree of understanding which then makes me feel down.” [Student 8]</i></p>	<p>Outside Classroom Category: Impact Sub-category: Outside Classroom Code: IMPACT: OUT</p> <p><i>“I think I am not developing, it’s a waste, I feel guilty because I can’t feel the enjoyment as a university student”.</i> <i>[Student 5]</i></p>

4. FINDINGS

The students interviewed were mostly top organising committee members of students’ organisations, undertaking president, treasurer, and secretary roles, while others were regular members of the clubs.

4.1 Challenges during the pandemic and the effects on student development

4.1.1 Outside classroom

Most students reported various issues and challenges during the pandemic, and from the perspective of the organising committee, a lot of the issues revolve around effective teamwork that they must overcome. They reported being unable to gauge the team members’ working pace, which causes work delays, inability to connect and communicate effectively among each other, and a lack of understanding of their team members outside commitments, which leads to overall weak team spirit and a lack of overall engagement.

From the regular members’ point of view, the pandemic has caused them a lack of involvement because, with all the programmes being conducted online and mostly revolving around talks and seminars, it draws their attention away from participating because they find it boring, non-engaging, and most of them look the same as each other. It is interesting to note that students did find that there was an abundance; in fact, too many programmes were conducted, but they were demotivated to join because of a lack of variety, and they were hoping for more than just talks, as explained by one of the students:

“As a regular member, the challenges would be there’s too many events but they all look the same that it gets a bit boring at times. There are talks that interesting, but I hope they actually gives us more than just talks” [Student 4]

Alas, the challenges they faced during the pandemic have also negatively affected their development. Their development is hindered as they cannot experience the full university environment and embrace the joy of being a university student, as illustrated by Student 5:

“I think I am not developing, it’s a waste, I feel guilty because I can’t feel the enjoyment as a university student”. [Student 5]

However, interestingly, these challenges also posed some positive effects on the students’ development rather than negative effects. Students reported that now they have learnt to become more understanding and patient, and even though they did report that the extra workload has made them very stressed, they are now able to overcome the stress and extra tension effectively. This has been illustrated by one of the students:

“It really affects me in a positive way. It was enhancing my tolerant level to people and also help me in insist on stress level. I’m becoming more accept with stress and can overcome it”. [Student 2]

Furthermore, students also reported being able to see things from different perspectives than their own. Plus, the challenges they were facing developed them to be more resilient and open to drawbacks, and they reported a sense of accomplishment when they successfully navigated through these trials.

“I believe it enhances my life development as I become more prepared to face many potential drawbacks. It makes me more flexible in a good way. For instance, I do not easily give up when things don’t go according as planned as I am always optimistic and open to the idea of a Plan B.” [Student 7]

4.1.2 Inside classroom

Each student has mentioned a few challenges and problems relating to how the pandemic has impacted their classroom learning. To begin with, switching from a traditional classroom to an online classroom appears to have a beneficial or bad impact on students' learning behaviours. As a result of the shift in the learning environment, some students who were previously active in class are now passive in the online learning environment, while others who were once passive are now active.

It's fascinating to discover that both (a) student personality and (b) changes in the learning environment have an immense impact on student participation in class. As Student 4 described, an introverted student felt more at ease in the online setting, which encouraged her to engage more frequently in class and to improve her skills through conversation. In her own words, Student 4 explained:

“I was never the one to talk in the classroom before the pandemic. I am a passive student. Just kind of blend in. But surprisingly I am able to talk more in online class. The reason is probably because no one can see my face. I could see the different though. I become more confident to talk about some topics. There are times I did not talk though but I do see changes in my speaking skills.” [Student 4]

Extrovert students, on the other hand, had the opposite situation, with the atmosphere making them feel less engaged in the class and demotivated in the classroom due to the poor internet connection and indirect interaction between student and professor. As Student 2 points out, such an environment adds to the stress of learning for students.

“I am feeling less motivated because the environment is not suitable for study. Most of the time I will having classes in my own room, or at my home. The environment was cause me feeling too comfortable and not create a situation that can make me study.” [Student 2]

Due to the unpredictable internet connection, the most common issue noted by most students, regardless of personality type, during the pandemic is getting engaged in the conducted online classes, instructional material, and activities throughout the semester. In other words, they felt that whatever they learned in the online class was not as effective as in the physical class. They also felt that their workload had been increased as compared to the physical class, as explained by Student 8:

“Honestly speaking, I am one of the students who always focused in the class and jot down every single thing. I will make sure to stay consistent during a class and get things done properly. But after pandemic, online classes do not really give me the same degree of understanding which then makes me feel down. It takes much more effort for me to concentrate and much of the connection that came with learning has been lost until that I don't have the mental bandwidth to sit down and take notes.”
[Student 8]

The majority of them were under a lot of stress as a result of the workload, which appeared to be difficult to manage both (a) individually and as a (b) group task. Firstly, the influence on individual health is determined by how stress and anxiety grow among students as a result of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) in an online learning class environment. The excessive reliance on technological gadgets, such as computers and smartphones, has resulted in an unhealthy relationship with these items. As illustrated by Student 1:

I became very stressed up to a point where I can only sleep for 3-4 hours a day. And I have somewhat separation anxiety with my phone in fear of missing an important message from lecturers [Student 1].

Secondly, group assignment workload is another significant issue that has a negative influence on students' health. Students encounter more difficulties in keeping their group members engaged and dedicated to completing class group work. They believed that the efforts required to keep the group together were enormous, and that this added to their stress. To compensate the "free rider" group members, they end up having to exert more effort. As Student 4 explained:

Group presentation, group assignments, group videos - everything that related to groups. If this was before pandemic, if any of my group mates aren't available or not participating in the discussion, I could always find them in the next class. But during the pandemic, they suddenly missing in action, even when there are classes, they might nor might not be available. We see them online, but they still didn't reply. This kind of communication is hard during pandemic and because we are unable to contact them, we need to cover for their work, which make our works even more than we should have. Not to mention people that are sending their part late because of other assignments. We do understand but at the same time, we also have a lot of assignment too. [Student 4]

4.2 Suggestions on how university eco-system of learning can further enhance the learner's development

4.2.1 Outside Classroom

Respondents used a variety of means to characterise their learning experiences. Additionally, they also outline how activities and experiences outside of the classroom help or impede their personal development. One student expressed concern about whether or not he was doing a good job of leading society. Hence, students have expressed their expectations of the university environment in improving the university system, whether in terms of administrative or online learning systems. They require prompt assistance when they encounter problems online, whether they are related to their academic studies or a club activity. They also expect that the procedure of approving the programme to be held at the club might be streamlined to make the preparation easier. Student 4, 7, and 8 made the following constructive suggestions:

The university can improve administrative and computer system accessibility so that students can reach out when they are having problems, whether academic or club-related. [Student 7]

It is hoped that the university could improve the university system to make it more organised and efficient as there are many issues regarding the application and student portal. [Student 8]

It is difficult to obtain approval to conduct a programme. And if the TNC is late in approving it, we'll have to start over and change the deadline. I believe that if university can enhance this, it will make things much easier for others. [Student 4]

Students proposed conducting a survey to determine the types of programmes or club activities that they are interested in, in order to enhance participation rates and stimulate students' interest in university programmes. Before enforcing the new rules, their thoughts and feelings should be considered. Student 2 recommended that:

Use the university site to create a section for the club to promote club activities, registration, and so forth. Aside from that, a club or society could conduct a poll to determine student demand for the type of programme they are interested in. It can assist in motivating students to participate in a programme since the content or type of programme may be of interest to them. [Student 2]

4.2.2 Inside Classroom

Although there have been several difficulties raised by students in regard to the online learning environment. Students have suggested that lecturers be more sympathetic to students' difficulties studying at home due to varying internet connection speeds and personal issues. Furthermore, students value lecturers who can be more innovative in their delivery of lectures and incorporate asynchronous activities. They do not believe that extended hours of teaching through WebEx are sufficiently interesting. As Student 7 succinctly mentioned:

“In my opinion, I think lecturers should be more considerate towards their students' situation during online classes as not everyone is privileged with good internet connection. Some of them also have personal problems at home which they do not talk about that might affect their performance in class so I think it is crucial for a lecturer to be more understanding towards the students. In terms of teaching style, maybe lecturers can balance between having lectures and also asynchronous classes to spice things up a little. Long lectures may cause a student to be disinterested so asynchronous classes could maybe give the students something to new to focus on.” [Student 7]

Students, on the other hand, felt that maintaining a positive student-lecturer relationship would certainly boost their intellectual accomplishments and allow them to study more efficiently. Last but not least, students enjoyed engaging in class activities that sparked their interest in learning.

In terms of the lecturers, it is good to have a positive relationship among students. When students are nurtured in such surroundings, they are likely to increase their intellectual accomplishments and learn more effectively. Also, some lecturers need to allow students to participate actively in a student-centric environment and have constructive feedback. The lectures must create a stimulating environment to make her students thirst for knowledge. [Student 8]

5. DISCUSSION

This study outlines the students' involvement in university inside and outside of the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Astin (1991) described outcomes as the changes in a student's behaviour as a result of exposure to the environment over time. Students in our study confirmed this prediction. They described how the pandemic has resulted in their lack of participation outside the classroom because all of the programmes are held online and primarily revolve around speeches and seminars. They draw their attention away from partaking because they find it non-engaging and most of the programmes look similar. Students' development has been hindered as they cannot experience the university environment and enjoy being a university student. These findings demonstrate that students' behaviours are changed after the COVID-19 pandemic and when things all go virtual.

The I-E-O model of Astin (1991) emphasised the importance of a student's characteristics in determining their educational success. However, the COVID-19, which caused a transition in the learning environment from face-to-face to online classes, has had an impact on students' participation in the classroom. According to the findings of this study, our students have been experiencing anxiety and stress since the COVID-19 outbreak. Students claimed that their personalities had changed and that they were once active in face-to-face classes but were now passive in online learning classes. They perceived that what they learnt in an online class was less effective than what they learnt in a physical class. Astin (1977, 1982) identified that student place of residence (environment factor), which is on-campus living, would lead to academic persistence in all types of institutions and among all students, regardless of race, gender, academic ability, or family background. As a result, when students' mobility is restricted and they study from home, it can affect their learning abilities.

In comparison to the physical class, many also felt that their burden had increased and spend more effort on their assignments due to the changed of assessing modes by lecturers. Students have a harder time keeping their group members engaged and committed to finishing class group work. They believed that the amount of effort required to keep the group together was immense, which added to their anxiety. This outcome is consistent with Astin (1993) and Strayhorn (2008) studies that suggest peer interaction tends to have great impacts on students' social and personal learning accomplishments.

Nevertheless, as the lockdown continues and time passes, students begin to exhibit positive behaviours. They learn to be more understanding despite the fact that the increased workload has left them highly stressed. They are now able to successfully manage the stress and tension. This means that the practise of online programmes or classes after a long period will have favourable impacts on student retention and personal learning improvement. Furthermore, students indicated that they were able to see things from several perspectives and that their problem-solving skills had improved. They are improving psychologically and mentally as a result of the happiness they get after successfully overcoming the challenges. This supported Astin's (1991) theory that students' actual educational experiences and practises will influence their mindset and emotional psychology.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICES

Generally, the objective of this study is to identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' involvement inside and outside of the classroom. Student involvement theory by Astin (1991) was used to describe student involvement struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative interview was used to collect data for this study. Eight students from undergraduate programme who are highly active have been interviewed to know their current lives (student involvement in-and outside classroom activities) during this COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, their experience of student engagement, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic, in enhancing or hindering their life development as individuals as well as university students, is also being explored.

This study found that students who want to learn online, either inside or outside of the classroom, need a supportive university system. The most significant issues among students were a lack of social connection, housing conditions inappropriate for home office activities, including limited data bandwidth, and an overall feeling of diminished enthusiasm and concentration. Therefore, the university must guarantee that students have a solid system for interacting with lecturers, club advisors, administrators, course mates, and peers. For instance, the university needs a better distributed server system that plays a vital role in providing web users with a fast and efficient internet experience by reliably delivering web-based content regardless of geographic location. Furthermore, Live Chat should be introduced in every school administration, not just non-school administrations like the library, IT department, or bursary. When students face academic difficulties, they will be more engaged with school.

On the other hand, the way instructors offer the learning experience in class and at university in general shapes students' personalities, thinking styles, emotions, and rising creativity (Sirotová, 2015). As a result, a good lecturer must also be an active listener, besides being a knowledgeable and skilled teacher. Good listening skills are required to establish empathy and understanding with students and to determine if they understand what they are being taught. On the other hand, maintaining a pleasant student-lecturer relationship would undoubtedly improve their academic achievements and allow students to study more effectively (Klem & Connell, 2004). For example, lecturers should express their concern and care for students by providing meaningful feedback and conveying the notion that they are supported in their learning.

The limitation of this study is that the sample size is based on a small number of students at a university degree programme as part of an exploratory research study, hence its generalizability is restricted. Therefore, this study can be improved by using quantitative studies that yield generalisable results for a wider sample using surveys or experiments.

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Reporting Key Audit Matters: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of the literature on issues concerning independent auditors' report involving key audit matters (KAMs). The paper aims to provide an overview of the existing literature, summarize their findings and implications, and give insights into the state of KAMs reporting. The study adopts a structured review of literature on KAMs reporting based on articles published between 2018 to 2022 in SCOPUS-indexed journals. The review shows that not much publication in the SCOPUS-indexed journals related to factors influencing KAMs disclosure, but it is evident that there is an increasing amount of literature on this topic, particularly from 2020 to 2022. Furthermore, it is found that research associated with reporting KAMs primarily uses quantitative methods. Hence, the literature review is useful for researchers to identify areas for further academic research. From a practical point of view, the findings from the study will assist auditors to better understand the issues related to reporting KAMs and obtain insights into the key areas where such reporting is issued.

Keywords: reporting, key audit matters, disclosure

1. INTRODUCTION

The current business environment and financial reporting become more complex due to the financial crisis and technological revolution. The investors demand more informative and comprehensive reports from the auditor. The demand was not only for the qualified report but also the investors request for further elaboration on significant matters discovered by auditors during the audit even for the unqualified report (PwC, 2017). Hence, the International Auditing and Assurance Standard Board (IAASB) has released the new International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 701 on Communicating Key Audit Matters (KAMs) in the Independent Auditor's Report effective from periods ending on or after 15 December 2016.

According to ISA 701, KAMs are those matters that, in the auditor's professional judgment, were of most significance in the audit of the financial statements (IAASB, 2016). But there is no details format on how to present the KAMs section and the extensiveness of disclosure under the KAMs section. In an effort to make the audit report more entity-specific, this particular disclosure did not provide standardized content (Abdullatif and Al-Rahahleh, 2020). To some extent, the disclosure may possibly depend on the entity's characteristics or related risks to the entity.

However, ISA 701 provides a guideline that matters reported in KAMs shall include (i) areas of higher assessed risk of material misstatement, (ii) significant auditor judgments related to significant management judgment (iii) audit of a significant event. ISA 701 requires auditors to choose, using their professional judgement, the matters that were of the greatest importance and presented the greatest risks to the audit from those that were communicated to those in charge of governance (IAASB, 2016). It seems that the auditor's professional judgment

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is critical in determining matters to be presented as KAMs (Ozcan, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to discover the existing literature on the factors that determine the extent of reporting KAMs by auditors. The remainder of this paper is divided into three sections. In Section 2, we describe our methodology, which is the process of articles being reviewed and filtered. While Section 3 presents the result and the discussion of the study, and Section 4 provides our conclusions.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study filtered articles through three stages. The first stage involved determining the database for searching the articles, terms or keywords, and year of publication. Because almost all initial literature searches yield a large number of articles, a strategy is required to determine which are actually relevant by including criteria such as year of publication, the language of the article, and the type of article (Snyder 2019). Hence, the study employed the Scopus-indexed journal database as the database to select the related articles. The keywords used in the database are “key audit matters” and the articles were limited to those articles published between 2018 and 2022 only. Based on the search criteria, 146 articles were obtained.

In the second stage, the 146 articles were screened based on the article's title and abstract. This is to ascertain that the articles that discussed only the term “key audit matters” was included in the search. Based on these criteria, this stage generates 70 published articles.

In the final stage, the articles were further screened to limit the study to review articles related to the factors that influence the extent of KAMs disclosure. and obtained a number of 21 articles. Finally, we selected 11 articles representing more than 50% of the total articles related to the factors contributing to the extent of KAMs disclosure.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the list of selected articles that were reviewed in this study including the name of the authors, the research settings, and the research design. Based on the table, we can conclude that the study was conducted around Asian, European and South American firms. The research design was primarily using a quantitative method based on secondary data which is the annual report. While only 10% of the research was conducted using the primary data which is the questionnaire as the research instrument. In addition, the majority of the articles were written by at least three or four authors.

Table 1. List of Selected Articles Reviewed

No	Article title	Authors	Research settings	Research design
1.	Understanding the determinants of the magnitude of entity-level risk and account-level risk key audit matters: The case of the United Kingdom	Laura Sierra-García, Nicolas Gambetta, María A. García-Benau and Manuel Orta-Perez	70 companies from Financial Time Stock Exchange (FTSE) in the UK during the period 2013 to 2016.	Regression analysis
2.	What matters in disclosures of key audit matters: Evidence from Europe	Inês Pinto and Ana Isabel Morais	UK's FTSE 100, France's CAC 40, or the Netherlands's AEX 25 for year-ended 2016	Regression analysis
3.	Analysis of the relationship between company characteristics and key audit matters disclosed	Catarina Ferreira and Ana Isabel Morais	447 Brazilian companies listed on the São Paulo Securities, Commodities, and Futures Exchange on 31 December 2016	Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression
4.	Determining factors of key audit matter disclosure in Thailand	Suneerat Wuttichindanon and Panya Issarawornrawanich	Stock Exchange of Thailand listed firms for the fiscal year-ends 2016 and 2017	Regression analysis
5.	Female audit partners and extended audit reporting	Tarek Abdelfattah, Mohamed Elmahgoub and Ahmed A. Elamer	312 non-financial UK companies listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE)	Regression analysis

6.	Sustainable corporate governance and new auditing issues: preliminary empirical evidence on key audit matters	Pietro Fera, Michele Pizzo, Rosa Vinciguerra and Giorgio Ricciardi	118 non-financial companies listed on the Italian Stock Exchange from 2017 to 2019	Regression analysis
7.	Measurement uncertainty and management bias in accounting estimates: the perspective of key audit matters reported by Chinese firms' auditors	Chee Kwong Lau	351 Chinese-listed firms	Content analysis Regression analysis
8.	Matters may matter: The disclosure of key audit matters in the Middle East.	Osama A. Mah'd and Ghassan H. Mardini	281 firms from four countries (Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan) for four years (2017–2020)	Disclosure index Regression analysis
9.	Disclosure of key audit matters (KAMs) in financial reporting: evidence from an emerging economy	Md Mustafizur Rahaman, Md Moazzem Hossain and Md. Borhan Uddin Bhuiyan	246 companies listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) from 2018 to 2020.	Content analysis Regression analysis
10.	External auditor and KAMs reporting in the alternative capital market of Thailand	Muttanachai Suttipun	All companies under the market for alternative investment (MAI) in Thailand from 2016 to 2018	Content analysis Multiple regression
11.	Impact of auditor characteristics and Covid-19 Pandemic on KAMs reporting	Mohamed Abdel Aziz Hegazy, Rasha El-Haddad And Noha Mahmoud Kamareldawla	82 auditors from Big4 and non-Big 4 accounting firms in Egypt	Questionnaire Regression analysis

Table 2 provides an overview of the main factors that contributed to the extent of reporting KAMs and the variables adopted in the articles. Based on the literature review conducted, the recent studies on the influence of KAM disclosures can be grouped into three main factors. The first factor influencing the extent of KAMs disclosure is the auditor's characteristics. The auditor's characteristics are measured based on auditor rotation (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2018; Suttipun, 2022), audit fees (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2019; Ferreira and Morais, 2020; Rahaman et al., 2022; Suttipun, 2022), audit firm type (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Ferreira and Morais, 2020; Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020; Rahaman et al., 2022; Suttipun, 2022; Hegazy et al., 2022), auditor's gender (Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020; Abdelfattah. 2021; Hegazy et al., 2022), industry specialization (Hegazy et al., 2022), professional qualification (Hegazy et al., 2022), auditor's position (Hegazy et al., 2022), auditor's expertise (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2019; Lau, 2021) and audit opinion (Ferreira and Morais, 2020).

While the second factor is related to the firm's characteristics. The variables examined in the literature are leverage (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2019; Ferreira and Morais, 2020; Mah'd and Mardini, 2022), firm's complexity (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2019; Ferreira and Morais, 2020), profitability (Ferreira and Morais, 2020), industry type (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2019; Mah'd and Mardini, 2022; Rahaman et al., 2022), size (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Rahaman et al., 2022), firm's age (Rahaman et al., 2022) and environmentally sensitive industry (Rahaman et al., 2022).

Finally, the review found that corporate governance mechanisms are the third factor influencing the extent of KAMs disclosure. The literature measured the corporate governance mechanisms using the audit committee size (Mah'd and Mardini, 2022), number of audit committee meetings (Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020; Mah'd and Mardini, 2022), number of the audit committee with financial expertise (Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020; Mah'd and Mardini, 2022), number of independent directors (Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020), female representation in the audit committee (Mah'd and Mardini, 2022) and the quality of corporate governance system (governance score) (Fera et al. 2021).

Table 2. Main Determinants and the Variables

Main determinants	Independent Variables	Dependent variables
1. Auditor's characteristics	1. Auditor rotation/ tenure	KAMs disclosure
	2. Audit fees	
	3. Audit firm type	
	4. Auditor's gender	
	5. Industry specialization	
	6. Professional qualification	
	7. Auditor's position	
	8. Expertise/ Judgment	
	9. Audit opinion	
2. Firm's characteristics	1. Leverage	KAMs disclosure
	2. Complexity	
	3. Profit	
	4. Industry type/ regulation	
	5. Size	
	6. Age	
	7. Environmentally sensitive industry	
3. Corporate governance mechanisms	1. Audit committee size	KAMs disclosure
	2. Number of audit committee meetings	
	3. Number of the audit committee with financial expertise	
	4. Number of independent directors	
	5. Quality of corporate governance system (governance score)	
	6. Gender of the audit committee	

Table 3 represents the main findings on the determinants of the extent of reporting KAMs. It describes the relationship between the independent variables adopted in the literature against the dependent variable which is the extent of KAMs disclosure.

Table 3. The Main Findings - Determinants of the Extent of Reporting Key Audit Matters

Main determinants	Variables	Research settings	Main findings	
Auditor's characteristics	Auditor rotation/ tenure	UK FTSE	Auditor rotation/tenure does not influence the extent of KAMs disclosure	
		UK, France, Netherlands		
		MAI in Thailand		
	Audit fees	UK FTSE	No association	
		UK, France, Netherlands	Positive influence over the extent of KAMs disclosure	
		Brazilian firms	Lower audit fees is associated with more KAMs disclosure	
		MAI in Thailand	Positive influence over the extent of KAMs disclosure	
		Auditor type	Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE)	No association
			UK FTSE	Deloitte, EY and KPMG disclose lesser KAM as compared to PwC.
	DSE		No association	
	Gender	MAI in Thailand	Questionnaire to Egyptian auditors	Big 4 firms tend to disclose more KAMs
			Thai listed firm	Big 4 firms tend to disclose more KAMs
Brazilian firms			Big 4 firms tend to disclose more KAMs	
UK LSE		Questionnaire to Egyptian auditors	Female partners disclose more KAMs	
		Thai listed firm	No association	
		Thai listed firm	No association	

	Industry specialization	Questionnaire to Egyptian auditors	Auditor with industry specialization, especially in manufacturing, has significant influence over reporting KAMs
	Professional qualification	Questionnaire to Egyptian auditors	Auditors with prof certificates, such as CPA, ACCA, has significant influence over reporting KAMs
	Auditor's position	Questionnaire to Egyptian auditors	Auditor with higher position has a significant influence on KAMs disclosure
	Expertise/ Judgment	UK FTSE	Negative influence over the extent of KAMs disclosure
		UK, France, Netherlands	Information that requires the auditor's expertise/judgment was disclosed more in KAMs
		China	Information that requires the auditor's expertise/judgment was disclosed more in KAMs
Firm's characteristics	Audit opinion	Brazilian firm	Firms with modified audit opinions present fewer KAMs.
	Leverage	UK FTSE	Auditor of low leverage firms disclose more KAMs
		UK, France, Netherlands	No association
		Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan Brazilian firms	Auditor of high leverage firms disclose more KAMs No association
	Complexity	UK FTSE	The firm's complexity has a negative influence on reporting KAMs by the auditor
		UK, France, Netherlands	The firm's complexity has a direct influence over reporting KAMs by the auditor
		Brazilian firms	The firm's complexity has a direct influence over reporting KAMs by the auditor
Profit	Brazilian firms	No association	
Industry type/regulation	Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan	Auditors of regulated firms disclose more KAMs.	
	DSE	Auditors of regulated firms disclose more KAMs.	
Size	UK, France, Netherlands	Fewer KAMs for the banking industry	
	UK FTSE	Larger firms have more KAMs disclosure	
	DSE	Larger firms have more KAMs disclosure	
Age	DSE	Auditors of older firms disclose more KAMs	
Environmentally sensitive industry (e.g. oil, gas and coal exploration)	DSE	Auditors of firms within an environmentally sensitive industry disclose more KAMs	
Corporate governance mechanisms	Audit committee size	Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan	No association
	Number of audit committee meetings	Thai listed firms	No association
		Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan	
	Number of the audit committee with financial expertise	Thai listed firms	No association
		Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan	Positive influence on the extent of KAMs disclosure
Number of independent directors	Thai listed firms	Positive influence on the extent of KAMs disclosure	

Female representation in the audit committee	Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan	Female representation in audit committee influences more KAMs disclosure
Quality of corporate governance system (governance score)	Italian firms	Good corporate governance system is directly associated with more KAMs disclosure

The first main determinant of the extent of reporting KAMs is the auditor's characteristics. The analysis shows that auditor rotation or tenure does not influence the extent of KAMs disclosure (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2018; Suttipun, 2022). Mixed results were found for audit fees. Sierra-Garcia et al. (2019) and Rahaman et al. (2022) found no relationship between audit fees and the extent of KAMs disclosure, but the study conducted in the UK, France, Netherlands and market for alternative investment (MAI) in Thailand indicated a positive influence over the extent of reporting KAMs by the auditor (Pinto and Morais, 2019; Suttipun, 2022), and audit fees also have a significant negative influence over the extent of reporting KAMs within the Brazilian firms (Ferreira and Morais, 2020). In terms of the influence of auditor type over the extent of KAMs reporting, Big 4 accounting firms disclose more KAMs within Thailand and Brazilian firms (Ferreira and Morais, 2020; Suttipun, 2022), but no relations were found between Dhaka and Egypt capital market (Rahaman et al., 2022; Hegazy et al., 2022).

In addition, the research was also conducted employing auditor gender as a proxied. Particularly, the auditor's gender did not have an influence over the KAMs disclosure (Hegazy et al., 2022; Suttipun, 2022), except for the sample of UK London Stock Exchange (LSE) firms, where the evidence discovered that female partners disclose more KAMs (Abdelfattah, 2021). Furthermore, the literature found that auditor with industry specialization, especially in manufacturing, has a significant influence over reporting KAMs, while auditors with professional certificates, such as CPA, and ACCA, and auditor with higher position has also a significant influence over the extent of KAMs disclosure (Hegazy et al., 2022). Information that requires the auditor's expertise or judgment was disclosed more in KAMs (Pinto and Morais, 2019; Lau, 2021), whereas firms with modified audit opinions present fewer KAMs (Ferreira and Morais, 2020)

The second main determinant of KAMs reporting is the firm's characteristics. The firm's leverage or indebtedness was utilized as the determinant of the extent of reporting KAMs. However, no association was found using the sample of UK, France, Netherlands, and Brazilian firms (Pinto and Morais, 2019; Ferreira and Morais, 2020), but a positive association was found within the middle east firms (Mah'd and Mardini, 2022) and a negative association in the UK FTSE firms (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019). Based on the study, mainly, the firm's complexity has an influence over reporting KAMs by the auditor (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Pinto and Morais, 2019; Ferreira and Morais, 2020). Furthermore, it was found that the firm's profitability did not have any influence over the extent of KAMs disclosure (Ferreira and Morais, 2020).

Pinto and Morais (2019) discovered that fewer KAMs in the banking industry which is the most regulated industry. This is in contrast to research done by Mah'd and Mardini (2022) and Rahaman et al. (2022), where the auditors of regulated firms disclose more KAMs. This is probably because the auditors of highly regulated firms feel more pressure to disclose more information in KAMs. Moreover, larger firms were found to have more KAMs disclosure (Sierra-Garcia et al., 2019; Rahaman et al., 2022). Likewise, auditors of older firms and firms within an environmentally sensitive industry disclose more KAMs (Rahaman et al., 2022).

Finally, the main determinant is the corporate governance mechanisms. No association was uncovered related to audit committee size and the number of audit committee meetings towards the extent of reporting KAMs (Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020; Mah'd and Mardini, 2022). In another study, the number of audit committees with financial expertise has a positive influence on the extent of reporting KAMs (Mah'd and Mardini, 2022). Additionally, the higher number of independent directors on the board is related to more KAMs disclosure (Wuttichindanon and Issarawornrawanich, 2020). While female representation on the audit committee board has a significant positive influence on the extent of reporting KAMs (Mah'd and Mardini, 2022). Finally, a good corporate governance system which is measured through the governance score is associated with more KAMs disclosure (Fera et al., 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

Being one of the most significant audit changes, the main objective of the paper is to discover the emerging paper related to factors influencing the extent of KAMs disclosures. The review employed the articles published in the

Scopus-indexed database from 2018 to 2022. Not much study was found in the Scopus database regarding the determinants of reporting KAMs by the auditor between 2018 to 2022. However, the result indicates a growing body of academic literature was found related to reporting KAMs in the auditor's report, especially from 2021 to 2022. There is no doubt that research on KAMs will increase significantly in the future based on past publication rates and the increasing interest in this area.

Mix results were found from the reviewed articles regarding the contributed factors for auditors to report KAMs in the independent auditor's report. Three main determinants or factors influencing the extent of KAMs disclosure in the auditor's report are the auditor's characteristics, the firm's characteristics, and corporate governance mechanisms. The review depicted that the audit fee, the firm's profitability, audit committee size, and the number of audit committee meetings have no association with the extent of KAMs disclosure by the auditors. However, the auditor's characteristics which are audit fees, auditor type, auditor gender, industry specialization, professional qualification, auditor's position, auditor's expertise and audit opinion do have an influence over the extent of reporting KAMs in the auditor's report. Whereas the firm's characteristics consist of leverage, complexity, industry type, size, age and firms within environmentally sensitive industries such as oil and gas have an association with the extent of disclosure. The final determinant is the corporate governance mechanisms, where the number of audit committee with financial expertise, the number of independent directors, female representation in the audit committee and the quality of corporate governance provides an influence over the extent of reporting KAMs.

Therefore, the review of those papers is very important to suggest new possibilities to study. The analysis of the articles found that all the research was conducted using the quantitative method, giving an avenue for the researchers to explore the area using the qualitative method or mixed method to further explore the area of KAMs in depth using the real phenomenon in real settings, for instance by conducting an interview with the auditors to gain information on the actual process undertaken by them to determinants items included in KAMs. From a practical point of view, the findings from the study will assist auditors in better understanding the issues related to reporting KAMs and obtain insights into the key areas where such reporting is issued.

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Crowdfunding as a Financing Option for Small Contractors

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Abstract

Difficulties in accessing financial support from banks and other financial institutions are the biggest challenge to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) including contractors. This paper aims to examine crowdfunding as a financing option for small contractors. A series of interviews have been carried out with nine participants including six founders and three funders. The results show that bureaucracy is one of the challenges for small contractors to obtain funding from financial institutions. The nature of their business involves various projects at the same time and needs to be completed in a short period. Therefore faster and easier financial assistance is necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the project through crowdfunding. However, trust is the main component of this method. Funders are more selective and therefore the founders should be able to offer a viable business plan or project that promises a good return. Besides various online crowdfunding platforms available in Malaysia like ECF and P2P, this conventional crowdfunding is still preferred and being practiced among small contractors. The results of this study provide insight to the funders to choose crowdfunding as an investment opportunity and help to improve the economy of the community.

Keywords: crowdfunding, trust, contractors, funders

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are a crucial component in the Malaysian economy that contributes a high portion of the gross domestic product (GDP) and also provide job opportunities to communities in the country. However, the sustainability of SMEs commonly encounters obstacles in obtaining sufficient funding. There are many options available for SMEs in terms of funding including from government agencies and banks. Some micro entrepreneurs use their own money and lending from family and friends (Prijadi Wulandari, Desiana, Pinagara & Novita, 2020; Baidoun, Luisser, Burbar & Awashra, 2018). However, there is a lack of studies regarding financing for SMEs in contracting enterprises (SMCE). There is a quite difference between SMEs nature of business with SMCE. A large number of SMCE comes from grade 1 (G1) which is categorized as small size contractor and mostly depend on government tender or become sub-contractors (Jaafar & Abdul-Aziz, 2005; Hasmori, Ismail & Said, 2012). Many SMCE face cases relating to delay payment and non-payment from the project owner and effect their turnover capital (Hasmori et al., 2012). Therefore SMCE needs an alternative option to finance its project and among them is the crowdfunding method.

Crowdfunding is a way of solution to addressing sustainability issues and is considered as their business model is less complementary to traditional financing, pooling a small amount of funding from interested funders (Short, Ketchen, McKenny, Allison, & Ireland, 2017). Many studies related to crowdfunding focus on digital platforms and crowdfunding models (Kraus, Ritcher, Brem, Cheng & Chang, 2017; Mollick, 2014). There is a lack of study on traditional crowdfunding that still exists particularly in small businesses like SMCE that need a regular or periodic financial injection to maintain their cash flow to continue with their work (Sabri & Mat Isa, 2020). Therefore, this present study emphasizes crowdfunding as a preferred financing option among small contractors.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Construction industry in Malaysia

The construction sector in Malaysia plays a vital role in economic development. This sector experienced robust growth during the period from 1991 until 2020 with an average annual growth rate of 7.2 percent. However, because of the pandemic Covid 19, it contributed 3.9 percent to the gross domestic product index (GDP). Although this percentage is relatively small it provides a valuable multiplier effect to the economy and other industries. The industry provides work for a range of people from professionals such as architects, engineers, and surveyors to main contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and laborers. In Malaysia, Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) is responsible to regulate, develop and facilitate the construction industry. Contractors under CIDB are categorized into seven groups (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Contractors' Grade in Malaysia

Grade (CIDB)	Project Price (RM)	Contractors category
G1	Not more than RM200,000	Building (B) Mechanical and Electrical (ME) Civil Engineering (CE)
G2	Not more RM500,000	B, ME, CE
G3	Not more RM1,000,000	B, ME, CE
G4	Not more RM3,000,000	B, ME, CE, and Facility
G5	Not more RM5,000,000	B, ME, CE, and Facility
G6	Not more RM10,000,000	B, ME, CE, and Facility
G7	No limit	

Source: cidb.gov.my

The government takes this sector seriously by also presenting National Construction Policy 2030. The policy focuses to improve quality in construction through technology, establishing a safe built environment, and improving the procurement system for government projects (NCP, 2022). Issue such as payment has been raised since Malaysia Construction Industry Master Plan (CIMP) 2005-2015, which recommend an Act be enacted to address non-payment, late payment, and other payment-related issues in the construction industry (CIMP, 2005). This act solved the issue of cash flow problems particularly payment from a government project.

The government encourages the participation of many Bumiputera to enter the construction sector with ease the registration specifically for grade G1 contractors. To the data in 2016, there are 35,555 contractors G1 registered and the number increased to 42173 contractors (CIDB, 2017;2020). Most of the contractors registered are small and medium-sized contracting enterprises (SMCE) that carried 80 percent of the population. The high number of SMCEs leads to intense competition and a high business failure rate (Jaafar & Abdul-Aziz, 2005). One of the issues is late and non-payment among contractors (Hasmori, Ismail & Said, 2012). Even though, payment issues between contractors and the government have been solved with the solution stated in CIMP 2005-2015. But, the problem of payment still exists between contractors (the project owner) and sub-contractors and this will affect their turnover capital/funding (Hasmori et al., 2012). Some cases showed the project owner failed to pay and most serious implication being declared bankrupt (Wah-Peng et al., 2020). Most of the small contracting companies' reputation is ruined as their trustworthiness with a bank is affected in such condition (Wah-Peng et al., 2020).

2.2 Small and medium-sized contracting enterprises

Most of the studies in the business area are more interested in SMEs but not many studies focus on SMCE, particularly G1. The number of G1 contractors is highest among other groups of contractors (G2-G7) because the entry cost as a G1 contractor is small which is RM5,000. During the early phase, financial assistance is often provided by personal funds and by friends or family. Financial aid is crucial for fostering the development of a business during the early phases of its development (Prijadi et al., 2020). According to Baidoun et al. (2018), the most important things for a small business's survival and success are having enough money, keeping good records with financial controls, making plans, and getting help from a professional management team.

The study by Jaafar and Abdul-Aziz (2005) stated SMCE has higher debt capital which a big portion of debt goes to suppliers. This situation affected them to complete the task and cause a delay in delivering the project. Knowing this situation, self-funding is not an option anymore. Government interference through the agency Tekun Nasional provides loans up to RM200,000 specifically for G1 contractors (Malay Mail, 2022). The government also urged the financial institution to provide loans for contractors. In addition, the nature of SMCEs' practice is to have or alliance with several companies registered under different grades and different categories at the same time. This common strategy is used to have many changes to compete in the project or government tenders. The problem of lack of capital happens if they have several projects at the same time. The funding alternatives are through crowdfunding.

2.3 Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a form of a collective effort of many individuals to pool money with small contributions in providing financial support to an individual or organization. Mollick (2014) defines crowdfunding as the efforts by entrepreneurial individuals and groups, cultural, social, and for-profit to fund their ventures by drawing on relatively small contributions from a relatively large number of individuals using the internet, without standard financial intermediaries. Recently, the crowdfunding concept involves the use of the internet and the power of the crowd to raise capital openly and transparently (Beaulieu, Sarker & Sarker, 2015). By using a crowdfunding platform individuals could supply small extents of money to economic projects or innovative ideas (Hoque, Awang, Muda & Salleh, 2018).

There are four models in crowdfunding, named as donation-based crowdfunding, reward-based crowdfunding, crowd lending, and equity-based crowdfunding (Kraus, Richter, Brem, Cheng, & Chang, 2016). This paper focuses on crowd lending. Funders in the lending model provide funds over a small loan and earn an interest payment. This includes a private person called peer-to-peer (P2P) or private persons and companies.

The success of crowdfunding projects is related to the amount of investment requested by the founder, the duration of the project as well as the contribution frequency by funders (Cordova, Dolci, & Gianfrate, 2015). A study by Mollick (2014) reveals that the geography factor also plays an important role in the success of crowdfunding. Local investors especially family and friends contribute earlier and are more responsive as compared to distant investors. Besides that, personal networking and underlying project quality are other factors related to the success of crowdfunding (Mollick, 2014). Forbes and Schaefer (2017) present the crowdfunding success tools like (1) choosing a smaller project with community-backing and consideration of social investment; (2) setting appropriate goals to ensure the expectations of the campaign are within their capability; (3) setting the reward option by reducing the profit margin, that is offering a lower price to the backers; and (4) presenting the key information that potential backers require such as the value of the product, how the money will be spent and the plan after the campaign. On the other hand, the information provided by the borrower in the form of updates and comments of other crowds and investment behavior is the other factor that influences the decision by the investor or funder (Hornuf & Schwiabacher, 2018). Moreover, according to Gerber et al. (2012), people are motivated to fund because to seek rewards, support creators and causes confirming value, and engage and contribute to a trusting and creative community.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Samples and data collection

This study uses small contracting enterprises and microentrepreneurs to represent individuals who have encountered problems in financing their business activities. Judgmental sampling is applied to ensure that investigators choose people and sites for the sample that have a better understanding of the research problems and key phenomena in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study uses small and medium contracting enterprises definition according to their registration grade or class with the Malaysian Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). Small contractors in this study refer to grades G1 with paid-up capital of RM50,000 or less with the tender limit for projects does not exceed RM200,000 (CIDB, 2017).

This study has conducted a series of interviews involving nine (9) respondents including six (6) founders and three (3) funders. The sample size of 9 interviews was determined to collect rich and thick data and found to be sufficient for achieving data saturation. When this research reached the data saturation threshold, it was determined that no new information was gained despite the collection of additional samples (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face and online based on the choice and comfort of the respondents, to gather rich and thick information from the participants.

3.2 Analysis of data

The video and audio from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed with thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti software. This research applied the six-phase thematic analysis method (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry (2018). This includes familiarization of the content, coding or categorizing data, and theme development by merging various codes to form a comprehensive theme. The themes were then reviewed and refined to find a consistent pattern. The next process was defining themes to recognize the stories behind each theme, and finally reporting the outcome of the analysis.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Nature of business

The construction industry has always been a keen competition arena due to the ease of entry. In Malaysia, most of the contractors belong to the smallest-scale, Class F category (Adnan, Heap-Yih, Idris, & Ahmad, 2011). Class F category is now known as the G1 grade mostly involved with supplying goods or services to the government through tender biddings.

"I'm doing small contracting works, G1 grade, bidding government tender. I often go for sub-contracting works"

Most of the contract works were carried out with a small number of workers depending on the nature of the contract works. Those employees were normally hired based on the terms or duration of the contract work and were paid wages based on the stages of work completed or daily basis depending on the type of the job.

"I have about ten workers on a contract basis, only two management staff"

"For cleaning services contract normally takes about thirty to thirty-five workers and their employees come to an end when the contract ended"

"We sometimes sub-contract the works and pay wages in lump-sum, however, we supply the material. We make the claim later when the job is completed"

Among the natures of this small contract business is the number of employees and duration that changes according to the tender obtained. Most of the contract works were on a short-term basis and the payment or claims are based on the stage of completion. Therefore, the contractor needs to keep sufficient and fast cash to start their contract works. Further, sub-contracting works depend on the job offered by the main contractor, and claims on the completed job will be made to the main contractor. The 'pay-when-paid' method applied in sub-contracting agreements results in a delay in payment received by the sub-contractors (Sabri & Mat Isa, 2020).

4.2 Funding management

The nature of the contracting works discussed above requires small contract operators to ensure sufficient funds are available before starting the contract works. A rising number of small contractors are facing delays in payments, insufficient financing, shrinking contracts as well as difficulty in getting loans due to tougher operating environments in the construction industry (Adnan et al. 2011). Delay in payments from the main contractor or the agency and having multiple job contracts are among the challenges facing small contract enterprises. Thus, the fast and readily available financing is preferred.

"We sometimes got more than one job at a time, got to start a new job while the other one is still in progress, therefore we need fast cash, we go for crowdfunding"

"... from then until now, I've been looking for funds from sources other than the bank"

Respondents chose funding other than banks, mostly from family and friends, a traditional way of lending. Crowdfunding represents a unique way for founders to raise funds for various projects. Apart from the online platform or internet-based peer-to-peer lending that gathers interesting funders with small amounts of money, respondents would rather be traditionally using fundraising.

“I got funds from seven to eight people at a time”

“...they lend me money for five years”

“I occasionally take a loan from the bank, but only when I found no other places”

Requesting money from the crowd stands in contrast to traditional fundraising efforts such as securing funds from banks, venture capitalists, and foundations (Gerber, Hui & Kuo, 2012). A mutual understanding and relationship between the founder and funders are most crucial during the process of exchanging resources to realize the hopes and goals of both parties. The reward-based crowdfunding and crowdlending are the most appropriate models related to this kind of business activity. Both parties have their motives, founders seeking funding and funders funding the small ventures. Motivations for giving among funders are related to interpersonal connections between the giver and the requester and communication styles (Gerber et al. 2012). On the other hand, the founder can raise similar sums of money through a large number of supporters contributing small sums (Gerber & Hui, 2013), instead of obtaining funds from banks or venture capitalists.

4.2.1 Trust

The process of crowdfunding begins with giving information to entrepreneurs who wish to obtain funds from potential funders. Trust enables crowdfunders to overcome perceptions of risk and uncertainty, and thus influences their intentions to support a project financially (Moysidou & Hausberg, 2020). The founders should be able to provide complete information about the projects and convince the funders about the viability and expected return on the projects. The traditional way of fundraising from the public that they closely related.

“ just based on trustwe have an agreement, based on trust”

“ We make sure that we have a win-win situation, so we trust each other”

“ most of my funders, believed in my projects”

On the other hand, the funders rely on the proof of documentation or the details of the project. A piece of complete information regarding the contract work will lead to the crowdfunders' trust in the project.

“They have the evidence, like tender agreement and payment schedule, I decided to contribute, can be trusted”

Another measure of confidence is that the trustee or the founder will behave expectedly and will refrain from opportunistic behavior. The willingness among crowdfunders to be vulnerable is also a critical component in building trust.

“I did not involve with the job, they are the ones who handle it, they will pay according to the terms in the agreement, that's it...”

“A loss in business is normal, so if the project is at loss, and they just pay me how much they can afford...”

“Some did not pay as agreed, they need the money for another job... understood”

“I never put any conditions, if there is a problem, he will take a few years to pay back, so we agree on that.”

Further, trust also can be built in the funders' strong desire to help the founders with whom they have a personal or extended interest or connection.

“I just want to help and like to help and encourage people in doing business”

Trust is about reliance based on the expected trustworthiness of the other party. The quality and completeness of the information on the related projects indicates trustworthiness and therefore helps to build trust in the project. The funders need to trust the indicators and the best intention of the entrepreneur or the founder of the projects. A ready-built relationship between the founder and funders also contributes to the development of trust. Further, trust is also related to the openness of negative outcomes to be experienced when the project or the other party proves to be untrustworthy.

4.2.2 Bureaucracy

Crowdfunding can be a fast way to obtain finance with no upfront fees. The crowdfunding process does not associate with credit rating compared to bank financing involves risk of credit and demand risk where a higher interest rate will be charged or even reject the loan application if the related project is too risky (Xu, Guo, Xiao, & Zhang, 2019). To lower the risk, detailed documentation and a stringent review of the trustworthiness of the project will be carried out by the bank. Such beurocracy and proper documentation seem to be a problem to most of the fund seekers.

"I did not apply for a bank loan, too much bureaucracy and documentation".

"...the easiest is crowdfunding because you don't want to be bothered with documentation. If the funder asks for documentation, it seems he is looking for someone else"

Banks take a longer period for loan processing and approval. The bank officer needs to perform extensive analysis considering all attributes related to the applicants and the business (Ottavia1, Chuluunbaatar, Kung & Luh, 2011). This situation causes small contract operators to be discouraged from making any loan application with the bank.

"Applying for a bank loan takes time, we need fast cash, need to complete the job in a very short period"

"I've experienced once, the bank only approves the loan while my contract works about to complete..."

The need for the fast available fund among small contractors especially when dealing with multiple jobs at a time seems to be a valid reason for not applying for a bank loan. On the other hand, loan approval by the bank is based on the belief that the borrower can be trusted to repay the debt and this should be done extensively to screen out potential bad loans. Thus, crowdfunding appears to be a better solution to the problem facing small contractors who seek a quick funding platform and are unable to provide proper documentation.

4.2.3 Rewards and return

Funders are the utmost important subject in crowdfunding. There are various motives for contributing to the crowd. Among them are the desire to collect external rewards, help others, and feel part of the communities (Moysidou & Hausberg, 2020). The reward crowdfunding model offers material and immaterial social rewards such as acknowledgment. Material rewards include the exchange of the product which is commercialized by the entrepreneur when the project is successful.

"As for me, I will always look for opportunities to invest anywhere and would like to contribute to a project with a reward, for example funding a new model of bicycle with solar energy, and I will finally be rewarded with a bicycle and not a profit"

Further, the helping behavior among funders represents a strong desire to help founders with whom they have a personal or extended connection. On other hand, the so-called lending-based crowdfunding reflects the lending of money to the founders in exchange for rewards like interest or profit sharing and repayment of capital over some time.

"I was first helping, when everything succeeds then we talk about profit sharing."

"My goal is profit so that I can use that profit to help others."

"The company I invested in has a proper record and he presented it, so we know he has financial health rights"

The reward crowdfunding model offers a lower cost in terms of communication as well as transaction cost. Whereas the lending-based crowdfunding model benefits the founders in terms of ease to get funded compared to the loan in a traditional way such as through bank and other channels. These models finally offer benefits to both parties in terms of personal relationships, shared interest, and helping the community as a whole.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, crowdfunding is among the best solution for small contract enterprises due to the nature of the business. The ease of getting financing with less bureaucracy; the trust built among founders and funders; and the returns and rewards offered by the crowdfunding activities contribute to the success of the founder and funder relationship as well as the projects or business. This study represents traditional per-to-peer crowdfunding, thus future studies should deal with crowdfunding by small and medium contract enterprises using internet platforms. The larger participants involving larger grade contractors from G1 to G7 would be more meaningful. The results of this research contribute to the literature on crowdfunding knowledge. It also provides insight to the funders to make crowdfunding an investment opportunity and help to improve the economy of the community.

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Developing an Islamic-Based Governance Framework for Bumiputera Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Combating Irresponsible Corporate Board Practice

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises' (SMEs) survival and growth depends on their business leadership and corporate governance, the ability to lead, manage and take full advantage of the resources available. Thus, the aim of this research is to develop an Islamic-based governance framework for SMEs in order to combat irresponsible and ineffective corporate board of directors. Interviews, focus group discussion and a questionnaire survey will be conducted with the management including owners, stakeholders and regulators engaged in SMEs to obtain their views on the current governance and the proposed Islamic-based governance framework. The expected outcome in a form of the framework is to contribute significantly to the country in overcoming SMEs performance weaknesses. Virtuous Islamic-based governance and ethical leadership style will be promoted among corporate board and to support the existing and new waves of discussions in governance of SMEs in helping the policy maker for its effective implementation which complements and strengthens the efforts made by the government to ensure an inclusive and meaningful socioeconomic development through the 12th Malaysia Plan (RMKE-12). At the end of the day, members on the SMEs corporate boardroom will have an accountable and trustworthy leadership with the implementation of Islamic-based governance framework.

Keywords: Islamic-Based Governance, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Corporate Board, irresponsible practice

1. INTRODUCTION

The Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation Berhad (SME Corp. Malaysia) is the central coordinating agency (CCA) under the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MEDAC) that coordinates the implementation of development programmes for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across all related Ministries and agencies (smecorp.gov.my). Market access for Bumiputera small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is limited with recent data showing that the size of Bumiputera entrepreneurs is 40 per cent lower than non-Bumiputeras, while income generated from entrepreneurship activities by non-Bumiputeras is double that of Bumiputeras (Daim, 2021). This is because the main, underlying constraint to the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is a lack of corporate governance structure (Mahmood 2014) and it has further been acknowledged, through prior studies on SMEs that, for a business to be successful, the critical role of leadership and good corporate governance has to be fully understood (Lekhanya, 2015).

This is despite tremendous efforts being implemented by the government to boost the economic growth of Bumiputera SMEs which started with the New Economic Policy, later followed by the National Development Policy, Privatization Policy, Vision 2020 and the New Economic Model, which aims to strengthen the economy and increase Bumiputera community involvement in entrepreneurial activities (Razak, 2013). Recently, New

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Bumiputera Entrepreneurs Scheme (SUPERB) was introduced and the Bumiputera Economic Council (MEB) was established to replace the Majlis Tindakan Agenda Bumiputera as a strategy to strengthen Bumiputera entrepreneur community. In addition to this, High-Performing Bumiputera Companies Program (TERAS) was also launched as a way to identify high-potential Bumiputera companies and help them to achieve sustainable growth through the provision of the RM1.64 billion fund (Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera (TERAJU), 2015). The implementation of an Islamic governance framework in Malaysia is not new, whereby in year 2010, the Central Bank had introduced the Shariah Governance Framework (SGF) which sets out the rules, regulations and procedures to be fully implemented by all Islamic financial institutions operating in Malaysia by 2011, with the purpose of the guideline is to ensure the effective functioning of the Islamic financial system and promoting its integrity. Hence, similar framework can also be applied to Bumiputera SMEs in order to achieve similar outcome. The framework was introduced in supporting robust and orderly developments of the Islamic finance industry in Malaysia. A new SME definition was endorsed at the 14th National Entrepreneur and SME Development Council (NSDC) Meeting in July 2013 as shown in Figure 1.

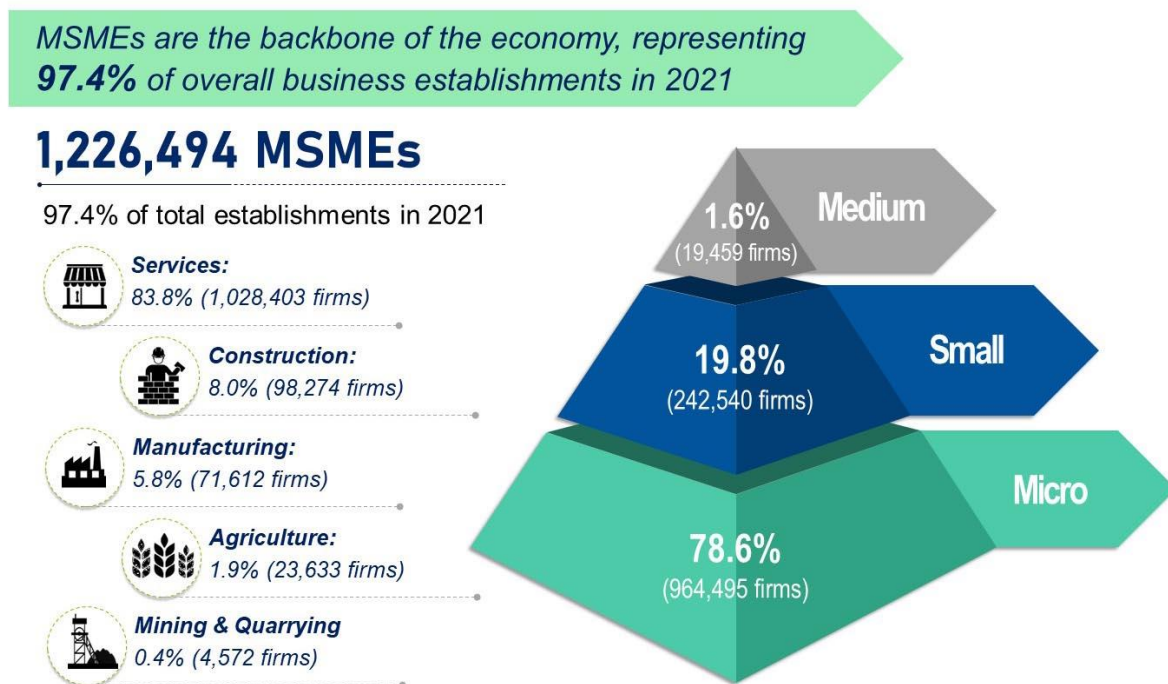


Fig. 1. Types and Proportions of SMEs in Malaysia.

Source: SME Corp. Malaysia

1.1 Problem statement

Various studies on Islamic governance were found to be conducted on financial institutions (Kamaruddin, Hanefah, Shafii, Salleh & Zakaria (2020); Muhamad Sori, Mohamad and Shah, 2015; Ihsan & Ayedh, 2015). However, up to date, there is no specific Islamic governance has been introduced for the SMEs in Malaysia since the genesis of SME Corp. Malaysia dates back to 2 May 1996 known as the Small and Medium Industries Development Corporation (SMIDEC). The growing Malaysian economy since the 1st Malaysia Plan (RMK1) have seen vast involvement and contribution of Muslim businesses owners which are known as Bumiputera. First Malaysia Plan was established with its objectives to govern the citizens' welfare as well as to increase the living standards of those with low-income groups. Accordingly, the principle and strategy of the 12th Malaysia Plan, 2021-2025 will be developed based on three dimensions including the economic empowerment.

The economic empowerment dimension will include new sources of growth, including Industrial Revolution 4.0, digital economy, aerospace industry, integrated regional development as well as growth enablers such as sustainable energy sources and infrastructure connectivity (rmke12.epu.gov.my). Limited market access of Bumiputera SMEs has created a gap of Malaysia socioeconomic between Bumiputerans and non-Bumiputerans.

Differences in types of businesses, productivity and technologies further contribute to the gap. The previous Malaysia Plans (9th, 10th and 11th) in their agendas to achieve balance policy targets were not accomplished. Various unethical issues by the SMEs owners or corporate boards could occur. Among the most recent one is the scam activities. Nevertheless, unethical Bumiputera SMEs owners may have been running a business and claimed their products as Halal but may have used illegal Halal certificates without getting the approval from Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM). Having said that, unethical activities could have indirectly contributed to weak performances of the Bumiputera SMEs.

From the governance perspective of SMEs, the Islamic-based governance framework has the potential to change and reshape the unethical corporate boards. in three key aspects: accountability, transparency and reporting. The Islamic-based governance framework appears as a new avenue in combating unethical corporate boards of Bumiputera SMEs. An unethical corporate board could significantly affect the balance of power between management, directors, stakeholders and regulators. Thus, this research believes it is important to understand the Islamic-based governance implications on the corporate boards or owners of Bumiputera SMEs and it needs strong governance framework to operate effectively.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

In order to achieve the research objectives, the current study attempts to address the following research questions as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Questions and Research Objectives.

Research Questions	Research Objectives
What is the current governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs corporate boards?	Examine the current governance framework in Bumiputera SMEs Muslim corporate boards.
Why does Islamic-based governance framework significant for Bumiputera SMEs in contributing to Bumiputera SMEs performance?	Investigate the significance of Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in combating unethical corporate owners.
How do Bumiputera SMEs strategize the promotion of Islamic-based governance framework to corporate boards?	Identify strategies that can be taken by Bumiputera SMEs to promote Islamic-based governance framework to corporate boards.
How do Muslim directors view the Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in combating unethical corporate owners?	Examine the views of Muslim directors on Islamic-based governance framework in Bumiputera SMEs corporate owners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

SME is defined under the SME Corp. Malaysia which can be located at www.smecorp.gov.my. The definition of SME covers all sectors, namely services, manufacturing, agriculture, construction and mining & quarrying due to various development in the industry such as price inflation, structural changes and change in business trends. Following to that, the new SME definition was endorsed at the 14th National SME Development Council (NSDC) Meeting in July 2013. To be qualified as a SME, two (2) criteria used are sales turnover and number of full-time employees as follows:

- 1) For the manufacturing sector - SMEs are defined as firms with sales turnover from RM15 million and not exceeding RM50 million OR number of full-time employees from 75 and not exceeding 200.
- 2) For the services and other sectors - SMEs are defined as firms with sales turnover from RM3 million and not exceeding RM20 million OR number of full-time employees from 30 and not exceeding 75.

2.2 Shariah governance of Bank Negara Malaysia

Shariah Governance is vital to Islamic financial system stability to strengthens and secure public confidence in the integrity, management and business operations of the Islamic financial institutions. Bank Negara Malaysia or BNM (The Central Bank of Malaysia) has first introduced the Shariah Governance Framework for Islamic

Financial Institutions in 2010 and required it to be implemented by all Islamic institutions in 2011 (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2019). The Shariah Governance deliberates on the board, Shariah committee, senior management, control functions, Shariah compliance culture and remuneration as well as transparency and disclosures.

The Islamic paradigm is driven by the objectives of ‘Shari’ah Islami’iah’ or Islamic Shariah. It includes

- * Al-adl and Al-ihsan (social justice and compassion for fellow human)
- * Barakah (Allah’s blessings)
- * Al-Falah (Realise benefit for the people in this world and hereafter)

Figure 2 illustrates the Shariah Governance Framework for Islamic Financial Institutions by Bank Negara Malaysia.

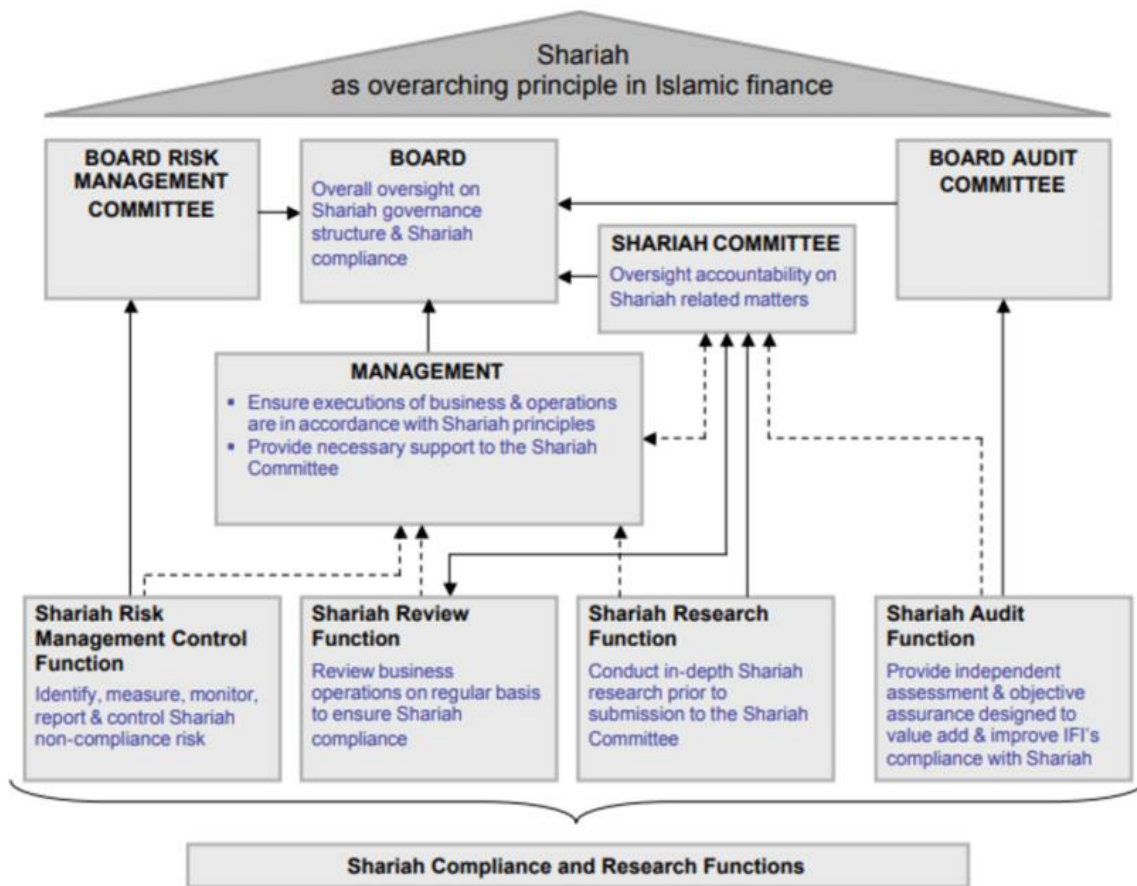


Fig. 2. Shariah Governance Framework Model for Islamic Financial Institutions

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia 2010

It governs every aspect of a Muslim’s life, be it relationship with Allah or with others including politics, economics and social. Haniffa and Hudaib (2002), in their seminal paper on Islamic perspective of accounting contended that the Western conventional accounting is in conflict with the Islamic paradigm. The self-interest perspective of wealth maximisation in a classical Adam Smith model does not sit well with the encompassing objective of Islamic Shariah (Ali and Owaihan, 2008). Thus, corporate governance in Islamic perspective constantly and closely associated to the moral and behavior in business governance with spiritual matters as a consequence of the belief of a Muslim to Allah. Lewis (2005) provided an overview of the differences between conventional and Islamic corporate governance.

In Malaysia, all Islamic financial institution had to implement the Bank Negara Malaysia or BNM (The Central Bank of Malaysia) Shariah Governance Framework for Islamic Financial Institutions. It was introduced in 2010 and was required to be implemented by all Islamic institutions in 2011 (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2019). The Shariah Governance Framework deliberates on the board, Shariah committee, senior management, control functions,

Shariah compliance culture and remuneration as well as transparency and disclosures. This shows how vital is the Shariah Governance to the Islamic financial system. It may strengthen and secure public confidence in the integrity, management and business operations of the Islamic financial institutions. However, the focus of this Shariah Governance Framework is on financial institutions. Unlike Malaysia, it was found that the implementation of Islamic corporate governance in Islamic banks in Indonesia have not been standardized and optimal (Indrawaty and Wardayati, 2016). Another important corporate governance framework in Malaysia is the Malaysian Code of Corporate Governance (MCCG).

However, the MCCG did not include the Shariah principles into it. Alnasser and Muhammed (2012) argued that it is very important to take into consideration the corporate governance in Islamic banks because it might help to draw the right image about the organization. Previous studies had attempts to map the relationship between country religiosity, their religious moral code and unethical corporate practices. Dyreng, Mayew and Williams (2012) and Mc Guire, Omer and Sharp (2012) had shown companies based in highly religious countries had less aggressive financial reporting. This shown that faith matters in a corporate environment.

2.3 Leadership style

Ali and Owaihan (2008) in their review of the concept of Islamic work ethics showed that there were implications of the Islamic faith and the progress of economic and organizational activities. They identified that moral principles, hard work and commitment to the community helped Islamic economy thrived before being impeded by colonisation. These values would need to be re-iterated in an Islamic corporate governance framework. Empirically, Rahman, Omar, Rahman and Muda (2017) in their study of Islamic ethical values of corporate leaders in top 100 firms in Bursa Malaysia found that there were significant and negative associations between ethical values and proxies of Real Earnings Management (REM). Another important finding was that Muslim CEO and Muslim Chairman greatly exert control in negating REM especially in family-controlled firms. Elias, Yaacob and Othman (2018) claim that religiosity leaderships style made significant contribution to SMEs in a form of increasing business performance at a certain market segmentation. Elias, Yaacob and Othman (2018) claim that religiosity leaderships style made significant contribution to SMEs in a form of increasing business performance at a certain market segmentation.

Nevertheless, a study by Umrani and Johl (2016) evidenced that family owners of SMEs in Malaysia expropriate minority shareholders' rights and perform illegal activities. Recent study was conducted on leadership style on innovation capabilities of Islamic school teachers in organizational learning perspective during the Covid-19 pandemic (Fadillah, Surur, Elfrianto, Roziqin, Suhaili, Handayani, Mufid, Purwanto, Muhajir and Fahmi, 2020). Corporate governance in Islamic perspective constantly and closely associated to the moral and behavior in business governance with spiritual matters as a consequence of the belief of a Muslim to Allah SWT. These findings stressed on the need of the implementation of Islamic-based governance framework for Malaysian SMEs.

2.4 How Islamic corporate governance framework works for Bumiputera SMEs

A major gap in prior studies on Islamic perspective is the excessive focus on its cloud over financial institutions (Daud, 2019; Lassoued, 2018; Lai and Samers, 2016). Optimal implementation of Islamic corporate governance can enhance public confidence and give good image for Islamic banks and ultimately impact and support performance of Islamic banks (Siswanti, Salim, Sukoharsono and Aisjah, 2017). While aiming at the gap left unmet, by the previous researchers, Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs is the concept which is still at its infancy stage if it is to be discovered as no proper definition has emerged. Extensive efforts need to be taken to derive at developing the framework.

To ensure the efforts taken are effective, it would be beneficial to understand the perception of existing Muslim directors of Bumiputera SMEs on the current governance practice of their corporate boards. The viewpoints from the management, stakeholders as well as regulator will ultimately support the views of the directors. There is a need to understand the challenges and strategies that may have to be taken to promote the Islamic-based governance and support the board of directors' leadership style. It would definitely a new exposure to be able to help the policy makers to discover and promote the Islamic-based governance among the corporate boards of Bumiputera SMEs.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

Based on the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of risk management of SMEs in this proposal as shown in Figure 3, the scope of the current research will focus on a number of Bumiputera SMEs in geographical area of Kedah and Perlis. The opportunity of having the current Shariah Governance Framework (SGF) introduced by the Bank Negara Malaysia is that it may be used as a basedor benchmark in developing the Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia.

Additionally, the Islamic-based governance framework will complement and strengthen the efforts made by the government to ensure an inclusive and meaningful socioeconomic development through the 12th Malaysia Plan (RMKe-12). Although the Covid-19 pandemic has not allowed most of the research activities being conducted as planned, the development of the Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs is expected to assist in combating the irresponsible corporate owners and strengthen the confidence and trust of stakeholders on Bumiputera SMEs.

STRENGTHS (S)			WEAKNESSES (W)		
<i>Before</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>After</i>
It was evidenced there is no Islamic-based governance framework been introduced for Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia.	The Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia will assist in combating the unethical corporate owners.	The Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs will assist in combating the unethical corporate owners and strengthen the confidence and trust of stakeholders on Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia.	Very few research was conducted on Bumiputera SMEs governance framework.	Current research only cover a limited number of Bumiputera SMEs in geographical area of Kedah and Perlis.	May not be able to include the whole Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia as population of a research.
OPPORTUNITIES (O)			THREATS (T)		
<i>Before</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>After</i>
Bank Negara Malaysia has introduced Shariah Governance Framework for Islamic institutions in 2011.	The Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia is currently developed and will support the Shariah Governance.	The Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in Malaysia will complements and strengthens the efforts made by the government to ensure an inclusive and meaningful socioeconomic development through the 12th Malaysia Plan (RMKe-12) and is expected to contribute to new insights for the agency theory.	The Covid-19 pandemic has not allowed most of the research activities being conducted as planned.	Most research activities such as data collection interviews and cademic conferences are conducted virtually.	Similar threats from Covid-19 pandemic could still be threatening.

Fig. 3. SWOT Analysis for Risk Management

3.2 Conceptual framework

A primary function of the conceptual framework is to lead to hypotheses relevant to the research problem. The conceptual framework of the current study is based on views of participants and issues gathered. The framework in Figure 4 serves as the conceptual framework.

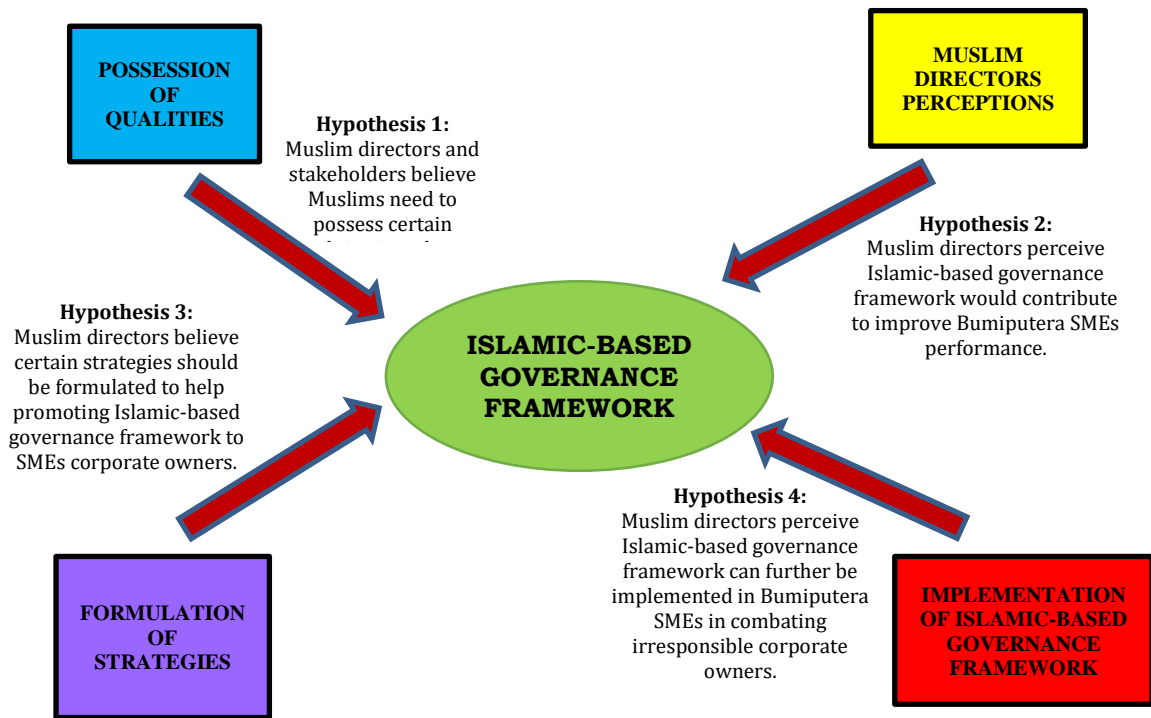


Fig. 4. Conceptual Framework

3.3 Hypotheses development

Based on the literature review as discussed in section 2, the following hypotheses have been developed in responding to the research questions:

- Hypothesis 1: Muslim directors and stakeholders believe Muslims need to possess certain qualities in order to sit on Bumiputera SMEs corporate board.
- Hypothesis 2: Muslim directors perceive Islamic-based governance framework would contribute to improve Bumiputera SMEs performance.
- Hypothesis 3: Muslims directors believe certain strategies should be formulated to help promoting Islamic-based governance framework to SMEs corporate owners.
- Hypothesis 4: Muslim directors perceive Islamic-based governance framework can further be implemented in Bumiputera SMEs in combating irresponsible corporate owners.

3.4 Data collection and estimation approach

In achieving the above objectives, the research proposes to conduct systematic interviews, focus group discussion and a questionnaire survey. Research data will be collected and divided into three stages as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Method.

Method/Stage	Description
Stage 1: Interviews	Stage 1 will focus on the actual practices of the current governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs. The data in this stage will be gathered through face-to-face, in-depth, closed and open-ended interviews with the management and Muslim directors of 20 Bumiputera SMEs around Kedah and Perlis. The aim of the interview is to gain the directors' views and experience on the practice of the current governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs. Besides, the interview is important in the formation of an Islamic-based governance framework that integrates the views of respondents in ensuring that the proposed framework be able to combat unethical corporate board of Bumiputera SMEs in the country.

- Stage 2: Focus Group Discussions The focus groups discussion will focus on the management of the SME Corp Malaysia and the group discussion will be made to further understand the development of Bumiputera SMEs and to look more closely at the impact of current governance framework on the Bumiputera SMEs. The collection of data based on the focus group can benefits this research since there will be more information and suggestions from the party that governs SMEs in Malaysia and to have their input in formulating the questionnaire. Having an expert review on the developed Islamic-based governance framework.
- Stage 3: Questionnaire Survey The questionnaire survey will focus on getting the input from the interviewees. The questionnaires will be pilot-tested and subsequently sent to a sample of 200 respondents consisting of the management, stakeholders and regulators of the selected Bumiputera SMEs in Kedah and Perlis and the SME Corp Malaysia.
-

4. EXPECTED RESULTS AND BENEFITS

Developing Islamic-based governance framework can be introduced and recommended to Bumiputera SMEs in combating irresponsible corporate boards in the context:

- *Society*: Running a business with strong customer engagement with the intentions to increase the living standards of those with low-income groups. The economic empowerment dimension will include new sources of growth, including Industrial Revolution 4.0, digital economy, aerospace industry, integrated regional development as well as growth enablers such as sustainable energy sources and infrastructure connectivity.
- *Academia*: To introduce Islamic-based governance framework which sets out the rules, regulations and procedures to be fully implemented by all SMEs operating in Malaysia, with the purpose of the guideline is to ensure the effective functioning of the Islamic corporate system and promoting its integrity.
- *Government*: To understand the Islamic-based governance implications on corporate boards or owners of Bumiputera SMEs and it needs strong governance framework to operate effectively.
- *Industry*: SMEs survival and growth depends on their business leadership and corporate governance, the ability to lead, manage and take full advantage of the resources available. Potential to change and reshape the irresponsible SMEs corporate boards in three key aspects: accountability, transparency and reporting.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, this research is expected to support the existing and new waves of discussions with regard to governance of Bumiputera SMEs in helping the policy makers for effective implementation of related policies which complements and strengthens the efforts made by the government to ensure an inclusive and meaningful socioeconomic development through the 12th Malaysia Plan (RMKe-12). The development of the Islamic-based governance framework for Bumiputera SMEs in combating irresponsible corporate board is also expected to contribute to new insights for the agency theory.

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Audit Reform: An Analysis of Public Sector Audit

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Abstract

This paper explores the public sector audit in Malaysia based on literature, audit report findings and newspapers. The results indicated that public sector audit in Malaysia has evolved significantly over the past century, reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability in safeguarding public finances and promoting transparency and accountability. Several key factors and reforms have contributed to this transformation, including the adoption of more contemporary audit methods that align with international standards and best practices, the introduction of the Accountability Index to objectively measure the compliance of financial regulations by government agencies and the emphasis on professionalism and integrity of auditors and audit institutions. It also emphasizes the importance of professionalism, integrity, and leadership in ensuring that audits are robust and effective.

Keywords: Public sector audit, audit reform, accountability, transparency

1. INTRODUCTION

The accounting profession and the field of auditing have, over the years, faced their fair share of criticisms. A series of high-profile mismanagement and fraud cases have rocked the financial world, prompting nations to take legislative action to strengthen accountability and restore public trust. From the United States to the United Kingdom, and even in Malaysia, these incidents have had far-reaching consequences, resulting in significant changes in auditing practices and regulations. For example, in the United States, the collapse of Enron and WorldCom sent shockwaves through the financial industry. These corporate debacles led to the enactment of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and the establishment of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB). These measures aimed to enhance transparency, accountability, and the reliability of financial reporting in public companies.

The United Kingdom faced its own set of challenges with the failures of companies like Carillion, BHS, and Thomas Cook. These corporate collapses led to the formation of the Audit, Reporting, and Governance Authority (ARGA), replacing the Financial Reporting Council (FRC). The UK's response was a move towards stricter oversight and more robust auditing standards. Malaysia, too, witnessed its fair share of corporate dramas, notably the Serba Dinamik case, which involved legal battles with regulators and auditors. Additionally, within the Malaysian public sector and government agencies, scandals like the "project tender cartel," issues with Port Klang Free Zone, the Sabah Water

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Department scandal, and the infamous 1MDB case raised serious concerns about accountability. The Auditor General's Reports shed light on various irregularities and questionable practices.

In response to these global scandals, the concept of accountability has been evolving and broadening. Scholars like Bovens (2007), Kaldor (2003), and Mulgan (2000) have emphasized the need to extend accountability beyond financial reporting to encompass a wider scope of integrated financial management and stewardship. This broader view of accountability emphasizes the effective and efficient utilization of financial and other resources across all areas of government operations. One of the primary outcomes of these scandals and the evolving concept of accountability is the expectation of audit reforms. These reforms are designed to provide greater information benefits to stakeholders. Auditors are now tasked not only with ensuring the accuracy of financial statements but also with evaluating the overall performance, governance, and risk management practices of organizations. Audit reforms aim to restore public trust, prevent corporate misconduct, and enhance the quality and reliability of financial information (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000)). They represent a pivotal step towards ensuring that auditing practices remain relevant in a rapidly changing business environment.

The accounting profession and auditing have undergone significant transformations in response to a series of global scandals (Kızıllı and Kaşbaşı, 2018). These incidents have reshaped the landscape of accountability, prompting governments and regulators to take decisive action. The lessons learned from these crises have led to the evolution of auditing practices and the expectation of greater transparency, oversight, and accountability. As we move forward, the auditing profession must continue to adapt to emerging challenges and maintain its crucial role in upholding the integrity of financial reporting. The pursuit of accountability, in its broader and more comprehensive form, remains essential for the stability and trustworthiness of financial markets worldwide.

1.1 Research objectives

Exploring changes in the audit regime within the Malaysian public sector and examining the drivers behind audit reforms is essential for understanding the evolution of governance, accountability, and transparency in the country. Thus, the research objectives are:

1. To explore changes in audit regime within Malaysian public sector audit
2. To examine the drivers towards the audit reform

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The evolution of accountability in auditing, driven by a series of global corporate scandals, has prompted extensive scholarly research and analysis. This literature review delves into key themes, concepts, and insights from academic studies and publications related to auditing, accountability, and audit reforms. The concept of accountability has witnessed a paradigm shift in recent years. Scholars such as Bovens (2007), Kaldor (2003), and Mulgan (2000) have highlighted the need to broaden the scope of accountability. Traditionally, accountability primarily focused on financial reporting and compliance. However, public sector relatively subject to inefficiency, red tape, lack of flexibility, ineffective accountability and poor performance that required administrative reforms via the New Public Management (NPM) (Siddiquee, 2006). The influence of the New Public Management (NPM) framework on administrative reforms is evident in various countries, including Malaysia. Cheung and Scott (2003) emphasize how NPM principles have shaped public sector management practices. NPM encourages a shift from traditional bureaucratic structures to more market-oriented, performance-driven approaches.

In 2010, Malaysia embarked on a significant reform journey with the launch of the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) (Rajandran, 2013). This initiative signaled the government's commitment to revitalizing the nation's economy and governance. The ETP aimed to enhance Malaysia's competitiveness on the global stage and promote sustainable growth. As a critical component of the ETP, the government introduced six strategic reform initiatives (SRIs) in 2011. These SRIs were designed to drive progress across various sectors. Notably, one of these initiatives, the Public

Financial Management (PFM) reform, focused on strengthening the government's financial management capabilities. The goal was to ensure the stability and sustainability of public funds, a critical aspect of effective governance.

In 2020, the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) unveiled the New Economic Model, emphasizing several key aspects of financial management. Notably, the move toward adopting accrual-based accounting is a significant step. This shift is crucial for achieving prudent fiscal management by providing a more accurate and transparent picture of the government's financial position. It aligns with global best practices in financial reporting and accountability. Efficient, broad-based tax systems play a pivotal role in ensuring revenue and fiscal stability. The government's commitment to implementing such tax reforms underscores its dedication to sound financial management and revenue generation, essential for funding public services and development initiatives.

Strengthening expenditure control mechanisms is integral to ensuring that public funds are used efficiently and effectively. Additionally, improving fiscal policy institutions and processes contributes to better decision-making and long-term fiscal sustainability. To bridge knowledge gaps and enhance competency and capacity in these reforms, the government has recognized the importance of collaborations. Collaborating with relevant stakeholders, including international organizations and experts, can provide the necessary expertise and resources to successfully implement complex reforms. The journey towards improved public financial management and governance in Malaysia is marked by a commitment to embrace modern principles of accountability, transparency, and efficiency. Through the adoption of NPM principles, strategic reform initiatives, and global best practices such as accrual-based accounting, Malaysia aims to ensure the stability and sustainability of public funds while fostering economic growth and development. Collaborative efforts will be pivotal in building the necessary competencies and capacities to navigate this transformative journey successfully.

Historically, Public Financial Management (PFM) in the public sector centered on input and spending control. However, Humphrey et al. (1993) point out, there has been a significant shift in focus. The modern approach to PFM emphasizes accountability and the efficient allocation of resources. This shift reflects a broader aim of making financial management more accountable, not just in terms of adhering to budgets but also in terms of achieving optimal results with available resources. Public Sector Audit (PSA) plays a crucial role in the realm of accountability and efficient resource allocation within PFM. Johari., Alam, & Said (2021) underscore the importance of PSA as a tool for improving efficiency and holding public officials accountable for their financial stewardship.

The role and impact of PSA on public financial management have been the subject of previous studies, yielding mixed results. Some studies have shown positive outcomes, such as improved accountability and efficiency. Avis, Ferraz, Finan (2018), Di Tella and Schargrotsky (2003) have highlighted instances where PSA has had a positive influence on public sector performance. On the other hand, there are studies that found no significant influence of PSA on outcomes. Andrews et al. (2007) and Raudla et al. (2015) have reported cases where PSA did not lead to substantial improvements in financial management or accountability. Conversely, some studies have even pointed to negative consequences of PSA. Behn (2001), Dubnick (2005) have documented cases where PSA may have unintentionally led to adverse outcomes, such as risk aversion or gaming of performance metrics.

Given the mixed results and potential pitfalls associated with PSA, it becomes crucial for audit regimes to be adaptive and responsive to the specific context and objectives of PFM reforms. One-size-fits-all approaches may not yield the desired results. Audit regimes need to strike a balance between holding public officials accountable and avoiding unintended consequences. Audit frameworks should be designed with a clear understanding of the goals of PFM reforms, recognizing that the effectiveness of PSA can vary depending on the specific circumstances and the maturity of the public financial management system. Moreover, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the impact of PSA are essential to identify areas for improvement and adjust audit practices accordingly. In conclusion, PSA serves as a critical tool for enhancing accountability and efficiency within PFM, but its impact can vary widely. Understanding the mixed results from previous studies underscores the importance of responsive and adaptive audit regimes that align with the objectives of PFM reforms while avoiding unintended negative consequences.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Reviewing public documents such as Auditor General Circulars, the Pelan Anti-Rasuah Nasional (National Anti-Corruption Plan) for 2019, and Auditor General Reports from 2002 to the present, along with relevant online newspapers, provides a comprehensive perspective on the state of public sector governance and accountability in Malaysia. Here's an analysis of the significance and potential insights that can be derived from these sources:

Guidance on Audit Practices: The Auditor General Circulars offer guidance and instructions on audit practices and procedures within the public sector. Reviewing these circulars can provide insights into the evolving audit standards, methodologies, and areas of focus during that period. *Compliance and Accountability:* The circulars may also shed light on the government's emphasis on compliance and accountability measures during those years. This can help assess the government's commitment to transparency and financial stewardship. By examining the challenges and issues highlighted in the circulars, it's possible to gain an understanding of the recurring concerns and areas where improvements were needed in the public sector.

Pelan Anti-Rasuah Nasional 2019 (National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019): *Anti-Corruption Initiatives:* The National Anti-Corruption Plan provides insights into Malaysia's efforts to combat corruption and promote good governance. It outlines specific strategies and actions to address corruption within the public sector. The plan reflects the government's priorities in anti-corruption measures and can be used to assess its commitment to eradicating corrupt practices. Evaluating the extent to which the plan has been implemented and its impact on reducing corruption can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts.

Auditor General Reports (2002 to Current): Auditor General Reports offer a comprehensive assessment of the government's financial management, accountability, and governance practices. They cover various aspects of public sector operations, including ministries, departments, and government-linked entities. These reports typically highlight weaknesses, irregularities, and financial mismanagement identified during audits. They serve as a vital tool for transparency and accountability by exposing areas of concern. By examining reports from multiple years, it's possible to identify trends in governance and financial management, such as improvements or persistent challenges.

Online Newspapers: Online newspapers provide real-time updates on government-related issues, including corruption allegations, financial scandals, and government initiatives. They can offer insights into current events and controversies affecting the public sector. News articles can reflect public sentiment and perceptions regarding government actions, accountability, and transparency. Monitoring public discourse through newspapers can help gauge public trust and confidence in government institutions. Investigative journalism can uncover hidden issues or misconduct within the public sector, shedding light on matters that may not be readily apparent in official documents.

In summary, a review of these public documents and news sources allows for a comprehensive assessment of Malaysia's public sector governance, accountability, and anti-corruption efforts. It provides historical context, highlights ongoing challenges, and offers insights into government priorities and responses to issues of transparency and accountability.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The Auditor General Institution in Malaysia holds a crucial role in ensuring accountability and good governance within the public sector, particularly in Public Financial Management (PFM). It operates under the framework of the Federal Constitution (FC) and the Audit Act of 1957, which outlines its responsibilities and functions. This analysis critically examines key findings related to the historical development and roles of the Auditor General Institution, emphasizing its importance in upholding good governance and integrity in PFM. The historical evolution of the Auditor General Institution in Malaysia is notable (Jabatan Audit Negara, 2014). During the British colonial era in the 19th century, various Malay states had distinct governance structures. However, with the establishment of 'Negeri Melayu Bersekutu' in 1906 and 'Negeri Selat' centered in Singapore, efforts began to consolidate governance and financial oversight. The culmination of this consolidation was the creation of the Director of Colonial Audit centered in London

in 1932, which oversaw financial matters for all Malay states. The 'Negeri-negeri Melayu Tidak Bersekutu' had their own Audit Advisor. The audit approach during this period was primarily focused on verifying financial statements and ensuring the maintenance of proper bookkeeping. Additionally, surprise audits were conducted to enhance accountability and detect irregularities. The legal framework guiding these audits comprised General Orders of the Federated Malay States Government, directives from the Secretary to the Government, Malayan Union Circulars, and Colonial Regulations.

In the modern context, the Auditor General Institution continues to play a pivotal role in safeguarding public finances and promoting good governance. Sections 106 and 107 of the Federal Constitution, along with Section 9(1) of the Audit Act 1957, establish the mandate of the Auditor General. These provisions require the Auditor General to audit government accounts and report the findings to the Yang Di Pertuan Agong (YDPA) with consent before presenting them in Parliament or State Assembly. This constitutional requirement ensures transparency and accountability in the financial management of public funds. The findings underscore the institution's responsibility in upholding good governance and integrity within the Malaysian public sector. Through rigorous audits and reports, it acts as a check and balance mechanism, holding public officials accountable for their stewardship of public funds. This role is crucial in preventing financial mismanagement, corruption, and fraud, thereby maintaining public trust in the government's financial affairs.

The introduction of the Program and Performance Budgeted System necessitated changes in audit approaches. The shift from traditional methods to activity and program-based evaluations aimed to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and activities. This transition aligned with global trends in public financial management. In 1978, amendments to the Audit Act 1957 expanded the role of the Auditor General. The amendments granted the Auditor General the authority to implement performance audits, focusing on criteria such as economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. This marked a significant shift towards assessing not just financial compliance but also the impact and value of government activities.

A notable directive from the government in 2003 mandated the Auditor General to audit Government Link Companies (GLCs) and their subsidiaries. This directive extended the scope of the institution's responsibilities to cover entities that received grants or loans from the government or had more than 50% government ownership. This expansion aimed to enhance transparency and accountability in GLCs, which played a significant role in the Malaysian economy. Between 2007 and 2012, the Auditor General Institution began using the Accountability Index, which scored agencies on a scale of 1 to 4. This index served as a tool to measure and evaluate the performance and accountability of government agencies. It provided a standardized framework for assessing their effectiveness in managing public resources.

In 2013, the institution introduced a system for follow-up audits based on the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAI) 3000. These audits tracked the actions taken by government agencies in response to audit findings. The Auditor General's Dashboard used color-coding (red for no action, yellow for in-progress, green for completed) to indicate the status of these actions. The formation of 'Jawatankuasa Tindakan' (Action Committees) was instrumental in coordinating and investigating issues raised in audit reports. A critical aspect of the Auditor General Institution's role is to report its findings and recommendations to Parliament once a year. This process ensures that audit results are made available to lawmakers and the public, fostering transparency and accountability in government operations.

The current audit approaches and practices of the Auditor General Institution in Malaysia reflect a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to ensure transparency, accountability, and good governance in the public sector. One of the fundamental audit approaches is the examination and verification of financial statements. This process involves giving an audit opinion on the financial statements of various entities, including Federal and State Ministries, Departments, Statutory Bodies, Local Councils, and Majlis Agama Islam. The standards governing these audits align with international and Malaysian accounting and reporting standards, such as International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), Malaysian Public Sector Accounting Standards (MPSAS), Malaysian Financial Reporting

Standards (MFRS), and Malaysian Private Entities Reporting Standard (MPERS). These standards ensure that financial reporting complies with established accounting principles.

To ensure compliance with related laws and financial regulations/directives, the Auditor General Institution conducts Financial Management Audits. This approach, often measured through the Accountability Index, evaluates the financial management practices of government agencies. The objective is to assess the degree to which agencies adhere to financial regulations and directives, enhancing financial discipline and transparency in the public sector. Performance audits, in line with the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAI), are crucial in evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of government programs and activities. These audits focus on value for money and assess whether public resources are being used optimally. By conducting performance audits (ISSAI 3000 & 3100), the Auditor General Institution can provide recommendations for improving the outcomes and impact of government initiatives.

The audit of Corporate Governance for Government Link Companies (GLCs) is conducted with the consent of the Yang Di Pertuan Agong (YDPA). This audit approach extends to a substantial number of entities, addressing corporate governance practices in these organizations. Given the significant role of GLCs in the Malaysian economy, ensuring transparency and good governance in these companies is of paramount importance. Beginning in 2013, there has been an increase in the frequency of audit reports, with a requirement to table them at least three times a year. This initiative aligns with the Good Governance Transformation Plan (GTP 2.0) aimed at combating corruption. More frequent reporting ensures that audit findings are promptly addressed and acted upon by relevant agencies, contributing to greater accountability and transparency.

The Auditor General Institution conducts audits of various government agencies, including Federal and State Ministries, Departments, Statutory Bodies, Local Councils, and Majlis Agama Islam. For the majority of these agencies, financial statements are audited on an accrual basis, ensuring consistency with international accounting standards. However, there are exceptions for Federal and State financial statements, as well as Local Councils in Sabah and Sarawak, which are audited on a modified cash basis.

The two-stage approach to financial statements audit, consisting of an interim audit and a final audit, is a common practice in auditing and ensures a thorough and effective examination of an organization's financial records. However, there are exceptions in Malaysia where Federal and State Statutory Bodies, as well as Local Councils, have their financial statements audited by private audit firms. The interim audit is conducted during the fiscal year, typically at regular intervals, to assess the effectiveness of an organization's internal controls, accounting systems, and financial processes. It aims to identify weaknesses or deficiencies in internal controls early in the fiscal year, allowing for timely corrective actions. During the interim audit, auditors review and test internal control procedures, transaction processing, and financial reporting systems. This stage focuses on evaluating the reliability and effectiveness of the organization's internal control environment. Interim audits help detect control weaknesses or compliance issues early, reducing the risk of financial misstatements. It provides management with insights into areas needing improvement and allows corrective actions to be taken before the year-end audit.

The final audit takes place at the end of the fiscal year, typically after the completion of financial transactions for the year. Its primary purpose is to express an opinion on the fairness and accuracy of the organization's financial statements. During the final audit, auditors examine financial transactions, account balances, and supporting documentation to ensure compliance with accounting principles and legal requirements. They assess the overall financial health of the organization and provide an audit opinion. The final audit provides stakeholders, including investors, government agencies, and the public, with assurance regarding the accuracy and reliability of the organization's financial statements. It enhances transparency and accountability.

In Malaysia, there is an exception to the two-stage audit approach entities, specifically Federal and State Statutory Bodies and Local Councils. These organizations contract private audit firms to conduct their financial statement audits. This deviation from the standard practice may be due to several reasons i.e resource constraints and Federal, and State Statutory Bodies and Local Councils may lack the in-house expertise and resources required to perform comprehensive

financial audits. Engaging private audit firms can provide specialized expertise and independence in the audit process, ensuring objectivity and adherence to auditing standards. Private audit firms may be seen as having less potential for conflicts of interest when auditing government-related entities.

5. CONCLUSION

The evolution of public sector audit in Malaysia over the past century reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability in safeguarding public finances and promoting transparency and accountability. Several key factors and reforms have contributed to this transformation. Over time, Malaysia's public sector audit has evolved from traditional audit approaches to more contemporary methods that align with international standards and best practices. This transition reflects a commitment to staying current with global auditing standards and ensuring that audits are robust and effective in protecting the public purse. The introduction of the Accountability Index represents a significant step towards objectively measuring the compliance of financial regulations by government agencies. The use of such instruments helps in assessing and benchmarking accountability, transparency, and financial management practices. Jabatan Audit Negara (2014) highlights the positive impact of the Accountability Index in driving improvements in these areas.

The successful implementation of audit reforms in the public sector relies heavily on the professionalism and integrity of auditors and audit institutions. Upholding the highest ethical standards is essential to maintaining trust and confidence in the audit process. Stakeholders, including the public, expect auditors to carry out their responsibilities with the utmost integrity and professionalism. The evolution of public sector audit in Malaysia has been significantly influenced by external factors, including government programs and initiatives. These external pressures, often driven by the need for greater transparency, accountability, and good governance, have prompted reforms and improvements in the audit process. Leadership within the public sector, including those overseeing audit functions, plays a crucial role in setting the tone for integrity and trustworthiness. As Jabatan Audit Negara (2014) notes, leadership by example is vital in ensuring that individuals in key positions exhibit qualities of being clean, efficient, and trustworthy. When leaders demonstrate these attributes, it encourages a culture of integrity and professionalism throughout the organization.

In summary, the transformation of public sector audit in Malaysia reflects a commitment to adaptability, transparency, and accountability. The shift towards modern audit approaches, the use of measurement tools like the Accountability Index, and the importance of professionalism and integrity are all indicative of a forward-thinking approach to safeguarding public finances. Additionally, external pressures and leadership by example have played crucial roles in shaping the direction of audit reforms, reinforcing the commitment to protecting the public purse and fostering transparency in the public sector.

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Social Initiatives Institutionalization, A Case Study of an Award-winning Company

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Abstract

Institutionalization is the process of establishing the standard as created by the company. Its goal is to provide business and stakeholders on its practises. There are four main processes or procedures on institutionalization namely, participation, self-regulation and assurance, performance assessments and evaluations, and reporting and disclosure statements. The best way to understand it, institutionalisation is a dynamic and ongoing process in the organizations. Thus, the primary goal of the study is to examine how business institutionalise their social activities, or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). DiGi Communication Berhad (DiGi) was chosen as a case study company as have received numerous local and international CSR awards. The early years of DiGi's CSR institutionalisation initiatives are covered in this study. This study's result contends that the business has benefited strategically from earlier institutionalisation of “dynamic and on-going process”.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, institutionalization, case study

1. INTRODUCTION

Institutionalization is conceptualised as the process of establishing the standard of practice by the business. Thus, there are five major procedures in business institutionalisation namely; reporting and disclosure statements, performance assessments and evaluations, participation, and self-regulation and assurance (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Xu & Woo, 2022). Thus, institutionalisation is best understood a dynamic and continuing process. Thus, the main objective of the paper is to discuss on the business institutionalisation of its social initiatives or also knows as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). DiGi Communication Berhad (DiGi) has been selected as a case study companies because of it's have won many CSR awards, local and international. Thus, the focus of the research question is on how, instead of why in institutionalize business CSR initiatives. The is because the why question is more on the pressure of business in its CSR initiatives, from the notion of institutional theory on pressure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1993). Furthermore, under this perspective the initiatives as a means of maintaining legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1993).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, an institution can be defined as a socially constructed template where on-going interactions between the business and its micro or macro environment run through (Hoffman, 2007; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The environment consists of organizations in the same industry, the society, government and anyone that can influence businesses to achieve their objectives (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hoffman, 2007; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Institutionalized is dynamic and continue in process in organization to achieve is mission and vision.

Scott's (1995) had clearly defined the term “institution” from the New Institutional Sociology theory perspective. He posits that the businesses should follow norms and behaviours that are associated to the institutions, they are in. Under this theory, business CSR initiatives will follow its institutional context, as the institutional environment determines the practice (Leppan, Metcalf, & Benn, 2010; Matten & Moon, 2008). This is because managers anticipate external pressure that do not always lead to the firm's desired performance. Thus, qualitative studies on

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CSR institutional theory allows researchers to understand firms' behaviour in relation to the sources of institutional pressure and the demands in shaping businesses CSR agendas. Therefore, the appropriate question under this theory is Why does the businesses get involved in CSR initiatives. Ozen and Kusku (2009) examined why some companies in Turkey go beyond environmental regulations in their CSR initiatives. Their study focused on the source of institutional pressures. They reported that the adaptation of environmental policies depends on the source of institutional pressure, such as market orientation (mimetic), industry concentration (normative) or business identity (coercive).

The present study investigates on how the business institutionalised their CSR initiatives i.e. more on institutionalised CSR process or procedure in the organization. We posit that businesses sometimes avoid following institutional norms. This diffusion situation can be referred to as 'decoupling' or symbolic conformance to institutional pressure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In other words, the symbolic act is purposely done to comply with external demands without changes in its actual practices. Sometimes, the decoupling strategy is important for businesses to maintain its operational structure and/or to protect organizational practices pertaining strong demands from stakeholders (Mayer & Rowan, 1977).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the research questions and nature of the study, we employ case study methodology. The case study method allows us to address the research question which are, how the business institutionalised their CSR initiatives. According to Stake's (1995, 2006, 2010), case studies is as highly interpretive projects. Stake (2006) believed that the most important role of the researcher in a case study is as an interpreter. He claimed that a case study researcher role is not only to discover an external reality, but as designer of a clear view of the phenomenon under study by way of explanations, descriptions, and provision of integrated interpretations of situations and contexts (Stake, 1995, 2006, 2010). Thus, the researcher can provide rich and significant insights into events and people's behaviour in their report. We choose DiGi as our case study company. The data obtained in this research were from external documents, interviews and observations note is considered appropriate for this kind of study (Adams, 2002; Cooper & Morgan, 2008; Momin & Parker, 2013). We interview persons which are CSR involve in business institutionalize initiatives. They are Director, CSR Managers, and Manager. The interview was conducted during the earlier implementation of CSR in the organization (2009 – 2015). Other than that, the data also taken from the business CSR reports and other relevant documents such as email on CSR news that shared by the business.

3.1 Background of Company

DiGi (previously known as Mutiara Swisscomm Bhd) started operations in May 1995. In 1997, DiGi was the first Malaysian mobile operator company listed on the Main Board of the BM Stock Exchange, under the Infrastructure Project Companies category, with a paid-up capital of RM77.7 million. Early 2000, DiGi has formed a strategic alliance with Telenor, a Norwegian multinational telecommunication company which is the world's sixth largest telecommunication company. In 2005, Telenor's share in the company has increased to sixty one percent, thus making it the majority shareholder, which controls the management. In the MSCI ESG Ratings for 2021, DiGi was raised from A to AA level (leading category), and in ESG Risk Ratings, it was ranked as the top Malaysian Telco (E-Vahdati, S., Wan-Hussin, W.N. & Ling, O.H.,2022).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section the result and discussion based on the four main processes or procedures on institutionalization namely, participation, self-regulation and assurance, performance assessments and evaluations, and reporting and disclosure statements. The interview data and document analysis show that the key factor institutionalized DiGi CSR agenda are philosophy and framework. The DiGi's CSR framework is not a standalone framework. All three core principles cover both internal (how employee see the company) and external (how the company is perceived) stakeholder. It is interconnected to each other's within the boundaries of CR philosophy, "Doing Great While Doing Good".

4.1 Participations

Participation refers to the persons involve in DiGi CSR activity. Data revealed DiGi institutionalised its CSR initiatives through dual mechanism, which are structure and people. Both emerging themes (structure and people) are mutually dependent. For instance, the structure gives character to DiGi CSR, while people navigate the

structure. Following are the explanation of how DiGi institutionalised its structure towards responding to its CSR. DiGi perceived CSR represents company responsibility to more than just shareholders or immediate stakeholder. Data depicted DiGi responsibility through connectivity and engagement of DiGi core business to the stakeholder. The process includes stakeholder priority matrix, namely, environmental assessment, stakeholder management and issue management. DiGi also view CSR should not discriminate society and community at large and that DiGi has its responsibility towards the stakeholder surround the territorial and global. Top management, and stakeholders were the two groups appeared in the data that support people in institutionalised business CSR initiatives. Firstly, the top management. The CEO said that:

“Full accountability and transparency will be the bedrock all DiGi’s corporate responsibility programme”

Triangulated the statement made with document, this study found evidence in 2009 Sustainability Report:

“At DiGi, CEO has taken a leadership role on our climate change programme. He, along with the rest of the DiGi Management Team spearhead many of the initiatives and the programs that we have embark upon.” (p.15).

This shows important of top management commitment in institutionalised business CSR initiatives.

Secondly, stakeholder emerged as the second group of CSR institutionalisation. An example from the excerpt as evidence of this statement is as such; the CSR Director and Manager explain on the important of stakeholders in DiGi accountability practice as *“accountability suggest we have to answer to our stakeholders”*. They explain further the mechanism use such as standard and reports is to assure stakeholder on business CSR or sustainability agenda, but the stakeholder engagement or involvement is to show evidence on the institutionalised process in CSR. As stipulated in introduction of sustainability report:

“Stakeholder feedback is reviewed and addressed by relevant functional personnel. Issues that are strategically important to our business are subsequently integrated into our corporate strategy and form the basis for our Sustainability focus areas and related initiatives.” (Sustainability Report 2012, p.3).

Furthermore, for example to accommodate institutional demands the CSR framework takes into accounts the state economic initiatives, which are the Government Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) and National Key Economic Areas (NKEA). The business attached its employees to the relevant department with the aim to have understanding on state initiatives and how the business can contribute to achieve them.

Triangulation of data with document support the above findings that stakeholder is an important group of significance in business institutionalisation. The following table 1 gives an illustration on the various communication tools used by business to communicate with its stakeholders. implicitly to show how the business accountable to its stakeholders.

Table 1: Stakeholders’ Feedback

Stakeholders	Feedback Process	Comments on business accountability
Employee	Internal communication, CEO’s emails to employees, annual employee engagement survey and leadership forums with all managers	Employees play central role in business CSR initiatives. By continuous communication with them the management will know the problems in implementation of agenda, or value their feedback and suggestions. Implicitly it develops their sense of ownership and pride in business agendas.
The government and regulators	Participation in government programmes and initiatives, for example Government Economic Transformation Program. Secondment of business senior employees to government bodies.	The government and regulators play important roles in policy development related to CSR. Thus, the business will draw its policy by following what the government wants alongside a supportive regulator policy.

Customers	Visit business retail outlets, setup customer service and develop social networking for communications.	Acknowledgement of customers' power as a force to influence purchases of business products and services.
Business Partners or Suppliers	Annual self-assessment for supplier performance, site inspections and audit. To give training on business agendas, for example the "Deep Green".	Business has to be aware of negative consequences on business partner performance when it delivers to the business. It is important for suppliers to know the business agendas such as the "Deep Green". The business also wants to know the partners' and suppliers' business practices and try to avoid bad practices by them.
Investors and Stock Analysts	Corporate presentations and analyst briefing sessions.	Communicate effectively by creating interest and knowledge in business CSR principles and performance.
Media	Media interviews, events and informal meetings.	The role of media is to help the business in disseminating true information on its agendas. Furthermore, media plays an important role to reduce the information gap between business and stakeholders.
Community and NGOs.	Partnership with NGOs	NGOs can help businesses in performing their agendas via training and educating employees on particular practices and issues.
Corporate Membership	Statutory member of UNGC, member of the Institute of Corporate Responsibility Malaysia, EU-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, GSM Association and Malaysia Technical Standard Forum Bhd.	Important membership for networking and learning on certain CR issues. Implicitly will increase accountability and transparency in business CR agenda.

Source: DiGi Sustainability Report 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

4.2 Reporting and disclosure statement

Reporting emerged as a formal institutional process that was established in DiGi. Data revealed that DiGi belief, reporting is a form of responsibility, and that DIGI is accountable to report its CSR initiatives. One of the main reporting appeared in the data is the sustainable reporting. As posit by CSR Manager, main objective of sustainability reporting is to mirror accountability practices in DiGi. Analysis of the interview indicates DiGi takes reporting seriously as in 2009, the new CEO established CSR report purposely as a mechanism of reporting DiGi CSR initiatives. Notably, prior to that DiGi did not highly emphasize on CSR external reports or take part in any CSR reporting competitions such as the MASRA awards promoted by ACCA. Evidence of the statement is depicted as follows:

"As Chief Executive Officer of this company, I bear the responsibility to ensure that my decisions are made in the best interest of the Company, its shareholders and stakeholders. I believe that we need to make a change, and someone has to make that first step" (Sustainability Report 2009, p. 2).

4.3 Self-regulation and assurance

CSR manager confessed that DiGi didn't follow specific standard for it reporting. He further explains the company also refers to the generic framework and methodology proposed by the BM, GRI, ISO14001, AccountAbility 1000 (2008) principles standards. The AA1000 principles standards serves as guidance in stakeholder engagement, GRI Standard for sustainability reporting and ISO14001 for environmental management. According to the data, the standards emphasised on relationship between core business strategies. Triangulating the data, this study found consistency between the CSR Framework and business strategies. It's proved of assurance in respect of validity of information disclosed in the report. DiGi, engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers as

the assurance auditor of selected key performance indicators and GRI application levels. As explained by the CSR manager, “Managing our climate impact” demands a higher quality and accuracy of reporting data, therefore the business had appointed the assurance provider for data reliability and improve their suggestions for enhancement. The statement was supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) press statement:

“During the event it was announced that DiGi Telecommunications, Sdn. Bhd has also endorsed the “Caring for Climate” initiative under the UNGC, a first for a Malaysian company. DiGi is honoured to support the UNGC and endorse the Caring for Climate statement for business entities. It is especially timely for us, as we have just launched our own Climate Change programme last week, called, “Deep Green, said Johan Denmelind, CEO of DiGi Telecommunications, Bhd.” (UNDP, 2008).

4.4 Performance assessment and evaluations

The study found performance refers to monitoring the result from business CSR agenda. As stipulated in the Sustainability Report 2009,

“Quarterly updates on the progress are made to the management team, who in turn update the board quarterly on Deep Green achievements and issues. Achievement of the “Deep Green” ambition is embedded in our DNA as evidence of climate targets in our non-financial KPI’s upon which we are assessed” (p.15).

The work achievement and is further explain on the third-party assurance engagement for the performance review which DiGi relates the objective is to increase accountability in the business CR performance data. The central mechanism for measuring the CSR principles is the monthly scorecard report. The objective is to know the performance of every CDR initiative and if possible, to make recommendations for improvement. The reports are prepared by all affected departments and are presented to the CSR director, which is later tabled and discussed in the board meeting. There are four major titles in the report; what is the CSR initiative, the objective and guidelines, key performance indicators, and achievements.

For instance, the report for key performance indicators are training percentages for integrity, compliance and whistle blower programs, customer satisfaction index, electricity consumption, paper consumption, percentage of green procurement and performance of community outreach programmes. As claimed by the CSR manager, there are so many variables to be calculated and it is unique as every department has its own performance measurements to measure the impact of their responsible CSR programmes. The statement and the following Table 2 show the institutionalization of performance assessment.

Table 2: Institutional CR Performance Assessment and Evaluations

Initiative	Objective	Target	Progress (2009)
CR Performance Review	To drive long term shareholder value through increased accountability and transparency	CR practices are inline with recognised (global) practices	Engaged PriceWaterhouseCoopers in 2009 to conduct a CR performance review against GRI, ISO 14001 & GHG Protocols across the company with a view to continuously improve practices and to benchmark ourselves with other major telcos.

Source: Sustainability Report 2009 (p.28)

5. CONCLUSION

DiGi CSR institutionalisation shows that People, Standard, and Reporting are stand-ins for four institutional mechanisms in institutionalized CSR initiatives: participation, self-regulation, assurance, performance assessment and evaluation, reporting, and disclosure. DiGi uses a bottom-up strategy when it comes to the people, with stakeholders taking into account their contribution in the institutionalised corporate CSR agenda, such as participation and self-regulation. According to data for standards, DiGi fulfils its duty and commitment to the

stakeholders in a way that is visible, like assurance, performance assessment, and evaluation. Finally, DiGi use the GRI as the reporting standard when discussing reporting. However, it is not required that a company adhere to a certain CSR standard; instead, the company may develop its own standard or framework, as is the case with DiGi.

Under institutionalisation, businesses must demonstrate how they fulfil their obligations to stakeholders and institutions. It also explains how individual or departmental data sources for CSR reports, like performance reports, must be included in business reporting principles. Businesses are impacted by institutional environments that are communal and networked to respond to requests and expectations from the institutions.

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Audit Expectation Gap in Nigeria: Stakeholders Perspective on Causes and Possible Solutions

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Abstract

This study explores stakeholders' perceptions on the causes and possible solutions to issues concerning Audit Expectation Gap (AEG) in Nigeria. In doing so, the study employs a qualitative research method and data is collected through face-to-face interviews with 12 participants among three stakeholder groups: regulatory bodies, professional bodies, and accounting practitioners. The data were analysed using a thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the causes of the gaps are linked to the knowledge gap among the users of financial statements expectations about the audit function and the roles and responsibilities of auditors. The analysis further indicated that the AEG could be reduced through audit education, enlightening the users of financial statements about the function of an audit and the roles of auditors, financial literacy program, and media awareness on the roles of auditors and through the use and adoption of ISA 700 into financial reporting practice in Nigeria. The findings might have practical implications to regulators on how the adoption of ISA 700 could be affected to improve users understanding auditors' reporting model in Nigeria.

Keywords: Audit expectation gap, users, financial reporting, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

There is concern that most of the users of financial statements hold different beliefs about the auditors' roles and responsibilities which connote the issues of Audit expectation gap (AEG). The term AEG emerged since early 1974 when the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) set up the committee "Commission on Auditors Responsibilities" (*the Cohen Commission*) to investigate whether a gap exists between what the users expect from an auditor and what auditor can reasonably accomplish. The Cohen Commission, which reported in 1978, confirmed evidence of the existence of AEG between what auditors do and public expectations towards the auditors' responsibilities. Many of the previous studies have found the existence of AEG for examples, in the US (Frank, Lowe, & Smith, 2001), the UK (Dewing & Russell, 2002; Humphrey, Turley, & Moizer, 1993), Australia (Gay, Schelluch, & Reid, 1997; Monroe & Woodliff, 1993), New Zealand (Porter, 1993), Germany (Gold, Gronewold, & Pott, 2012; Ruhnke & Schmidt, 2014), Malaysia (Fadzly & Ahmad, 2004; Lee, Gloeck, & Palaniappan, 2007), Singapore (Best, Buckby, & Tan, 2001), China (Lin & Chen, 2004), Barbados (Alleyne & Howard, 2005), Egypt (Dixon, Woodhead, & Sohlman, 2006). Similarly, in Nigeria, Olojede, Erin, Asiriwuwa and Usman (2020) have found evidence of AEG.

The issue of AEG is important to the auditing profession since the gaps can damage the reputation of the statutory audit in a society (Ruhnke & Schmidt, 2014). Despite the important, there is still scarcity of qualitative investigation on how to address the issue, it is observed that majority of researchers employed a quantitative survey for examples, (Gold et al. 2012; Fadzly & Ahmad, 2004; Sule, Yusof, & Bahador, 2019; Shikdar, Faruk, & Chowdhury, 2018; Alleyne & Howard, 2005; Masoud, 2017; Onulaka & Samy, 2017; Olojede, Erin, Asiriwuwa,

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& Usman 2020; Salehi, Jahanbin, & Adibian, 2020). This research is interested to add to the literature by meeting with the participants to conduct an interview and discusses key findings that emerge from the participants' perspective on the causes and possible solutions to the AEG existence. The findings of this research could be of interest to policy makers in Nigeria and other developing and emerging countries sharing similar socio-economic environment. Thus, the remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly reviews the literature on AEG existence. Section 3 explains the research methodology, and Section 4 presents the empirical findings and analysis. Section 5 provides the discussion and conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term AEG is seen as an ambiguous concept since there is no generally accepted definition of it. However, earlier researchers have tried to define the AEG into their research viewpoints and determination. For example, Liggio (1974) was the first to introduce the concept of AEG and defines the term as the difference concerning the beliefs of the expected performance of auditors as anticipated by the users of financial statements and the independent auditor. Moreover, Porter (1993) defined AEG as the gap between society's expectation of auditors and auditor's actual performance as perceived by society. Gay, Schelluch and Baines (1998) have a view that, AEG is the difference between users of financial statements perception and that of auditors regarding the function of an audit. However, Frank et al. (2001) consider AEG as the difference between what users of financial statements expect on the accounting and auditing profession and what the professions basically provides as audit function and objectives. One of the reasons that commonly contribute to the existence of AEG is a misunderstanding of the function of an audit among the users of financial statements. For example, Ihendinihu and Robert (2014) and Olojede et al. (2020) acknowledged that AEG is caused because of misunderstanding from part of the users on the role and responsibility of auditors. Likewise, Salehi (2011) pronounced the lack of knowledge and understanding of the nature of the auditor's reports among the public are the main causes of the existence of AEG. Pierce and Kilcommins (1996) also revealed that the AEG exist by users misunderstanding function of an audit. McEnroe and Martens (2001) shared a similar view with Pierce and Kilcommins that the AEG exists due to a misunderstanding of the meaning of auditing among the users of financial statements. On the other hand, Enyi, Efurueze and Enyi (2012) and Quick (2020) both claimed that AEG exist as users place more responsibility on auditors to detect fraud.

Humphrey et al. (1993) postulated that the AEG is caused by four broad issues namely, lack of public knowledge and understanding the role and responsibilities of auditors; and function of an audit; poor auditors' communication to the users; and poor auditors' performance. Another study conducted by Monroe and Woodliff (1993) also points out that, the AEG issue is caused by lack of understanding auditor responsibility and the reliability of the audited financial statements. In the views of Fadzly and Ahmad (2004) posited that AEG exists because of misunderstanding from part of the users concerning the role of auditors. The study of Kangarlouei et al. (2012) also indicated lack of knowledge of the function of an audit among the users contributes to the AEG. Another study by Salehi (2016) emphasized that the AEG reasonableness gap exists because of public lack of understanding the roles of auditors, uneducated users, communication gap, and users' unreasonable expectations of statutory audit.

According Porter and Gowthorpe (2004), AEG exists because of lack in auditors' performance and certain limitations in auditing standards which limits auditor from fraud prevention and detection, internal control checking and preparation of company financial statements. Porter, Ohogartaigh and Baskerville (2012) view AEG-performance gap exists because of two constraints namely, deficient standards and deficient performance. Another evidence was giving by Humphrey, Moizer and Turley (1992), Onulaka and Samy (2017) who both shows that the influence of self-regulatory policy by the auditing profession is a main cause of the AEG (performance gap). Salehi (2016) found that the AEG performance gap exists by lack of sufficient auditing standards and poor auditors' performance. Similarly, Haniffa and Hudaib (2007) conduct a study to locate the AEG within a cultural context in Saudi Arabia. The study found that AEG exists related to the performance gap with respect to licensing policy, political and legal structure, requirement process and main societal values. Another study on revisiting AEG performance gap in the UK and New Zealand by Porter et al. (2012) also documented that the AEG is caused by reasonableness gap and performance gap. Their comparison study found that AEG performance gap exists 40% wider in New Zealand than in the UK counterpart.

Likewise, Porter and Gowthorpe (2004) described reasonableness gap as a gap that exists between what the users of financial statements expect from auditors and what auditors can reasonably accomplish. Porter and Gowthorpe subdivided performance gap into two distinctive areas; deficient standards gap and deficient performance gap. They further explain deficient standards as a gap between public expectations on auditors' role and responsibilities and actual auditors' duties as defined by auditing regulation, statute and professional requirements. As well, they

consider deficient performance as a gap between expected auditors' performance of carrying out professional responsibilities and actual auditors' performance of these duties. The rising of the AEG issues on the corporate financial reporting and auditing process has led various researchers, accounting academics and professional accounting bodies rethinking and identify effective methods in reducing the AEG problem. For example, many of the previous studies acknowledged the relevance of audit education in reducing the AEG (Frank et al., 2001; Fadzly & Ahmad, 2004; Haniffa & Hudaib, 2007; Kumari, Ajward, & Dissabandara, 2017; Monroe & Woodliff, 1993; Pierce & Kilcommins, 1996). These studies indicated that audit education increases the public understanding of the auditors' roles and function of an audit which reduces the issues of the expectation gap. Additionally, Porter and Gowthorpe (2004) mentioned intensifying effort to educate the public about the object of an audit and auditors' roles and responsibilities reduces AEG. Another study by Masoud (2017) also acknowledged audit education as imperative measures of improving public knowledge and understanding of the function of an audit, roles, and responsibilities of auditors and it reduces the issues of AEG.

Monroe and Woodliff (1993) investigated the influence of audit education on AEG using an experiment between two groups of respondents among undergraduate accounting students and undergraduate marketing students. The study found that audit education has a significant influence on decreasing AEG. Similar research by Pierce and Kilcommins (1996) using survey research method and employed descriptive statistical data analysis to examine whether setting up of auditing course part of the undergraduate programs will contribute to reducing AEG. The authors found that audit education has an influence and increases the student knowledge on auditing and decrease the AEG. Another study by Ali, Lee, Yusof, Mohamad and Ojo (2007) highlighted the impact of audit education and assisted students in getting a healthier understanding of the auditor's duties also has an essential role in reducing the AEG problem.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study method. The qualitative approach is more suitable for understanding individual perceptions and offer in-depth evidence about beliefs, ideas and social phenomena into real-world settings more than would be obtained from the quantitative method (Gill et al., 2008; Merriam, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Silverman, 1997). The participant groups comprise Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRCN), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and professional accounting bodies Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN). The groups are selected based on their knowledge, expertise, and familiarity with the concept of accounting and auditing and they are concern stakeholders of the important financial institutions in Nigeria which are expected to respond about possible solutions to the issues of AEG. Aaltola (2018) declared that interviewing accounting professionals would have provided more strong information with a more specialized view regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, the AEG problems likely require the attention and experience of major stakeholders that can appropriately respond to the inquiries. Particularly, the FRCN has the statutory power of setting accounting standards and controlling the practice of accounting and auditing in Nigeria and SEC Nigeria regulating the entire capital market (World Bank, 2004; 2011). The ICAN and ANAN are two recognized professional accounting bodies in Nigeria (IFAC, 2018; World Bank, 2011). The accounting practitioners are members of various audit firms whose law specified under Section 359 CAMA (1990) required each company to have an annual audited financial statement by an external auditor. Consequently, auditors are stakeholders regarding audit quality and they are knowledgeable of the audit concept.

The data were gathered face-to-face through unstructured interviews with the regulators, professional accounting bodies, and accounting practitioners. The unstructured interview allows the research participant to respond to the worldview and it allowed someone to speak his/her minds about the issue under inquiry (Denscombe, 2003; Merriam, 2009). During the interview, 12 participants were purposefully selected. Purposive sampling requires that researchers purposely select and identify the sites as well as the individuals that can best offer a description of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The composition of the participants includes three (3) senior-level officers (regulators), four (4) senior official (professional accounting bodies), and five (5) audit managers/partners (accounting practitioners) were interviewed. The data were transcribed verbatim and thematic analysis was used to determine the actual finding of the research. At the beginning of the analysis, the researcher ensured reading the transcribed interview thoroughly before attempting to code any portion of it. This was done with a view to familiarizing oneself with the whole of the content.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Perceptions on causes of the audit expectation gap

This section provides findings from the participants' opinions concerning the causes of AEG in Nigeria. The findings indicate that the AEG exists in Nigeria because of several issues such as lack of public knowledge and understanding of the statutory audit and the roles of the external auditor, low-level financial literacy and users over expectation on auditors. In the first place, Participant 12, (Accounting Practitioners) described that:

"... for a long time, AEG exists in Nigeria because of the differences in the perceptions of users of financial statements on the function of an audit and auditors' actual duties".

Participant 1, (*Regulatory body*) also provided evidence to the existence of AEG because of the lack of knowledge and understanding the function of an audit among the users. He, further, made the following comments below:

"You see, understanding of users regarding the statutory audit and the level of their financial literacy is not very high in Nigeria. Most of the people do not understand the facts that the auditors' role and responsibilities are only expressing an independent opinion on the true and fairness of the financial statements of an organization. Because of the public lack of knowledge, they think that the roles of auditors can detect or prevent fraud in performing financial statement audit" (Participant 1, Regulatory Body).

A similar view was raised by participant 12 practicing auditor. He noted that – part of the factors that cause the existence of AEG is lack of knowledge and understanding among users of financial statements and other general stakeholders. He makes the following statements:

"... I think the major factor that contributes to AEG existence in Nigeria is a public lack of auditing knowledge – because if someone aware or has read what the auditing standards are saying with regards to the audit of financial statements there should not be this different. More on that, many of the users think that auditor is responsible for the detection of fraud and irregularities. I think this misunderstanding is what causes to an AEG to exist" (Participant 12, Accounting Practitioners).

One of the regulators (Participant 2) has also acknowledged the public lack of understanding and low-level financial literacy contributed to the factors that rooted the AEG existence in Nigeria. Reasons for the participant view are elucidated in the following comments:

"One of the factors that cause AEG is a low level of understanding of the role of auditors. Most of the users of financial statements did not actually understand what the real role of the auditor is. Moreover, the lack of financial literacy among corporate stakeholders contributed widely to the existence of AEG" (Participant 2, Regulatory Body).

Participant 3, (Regulatory Body) acknowledged the factors that contributed to AEG is because of the lack of auditing education. Participant 3 was quoted by saying that:

"... lack of education on the part of the users is one of the contributory factors to AEG in Nigeria. You see most of the public don't know the statutory responsibility of auditors that is one. Then, poor regulation of auditors' activities is also contributed to the existence of AEG. Also, the long working relationship of external auditor tenure may also lead to a serious expectation gap. Unfortunately, you can see some auditors spend around thirty (30) years auditing a company so even there is a problem with the company record they cannot be able to disclose because they become so close to the management which is a real problem that caused AEG".

Two participants shared similar views – that the causes of AEG are linked to the knowledge gap among the users (Participant 5 and 8). The following quotations illustrate their idea:

"Largely the root causes of AEG are the matter of knowledge gap. You see the auditor on one side has a statutory responsibility to observe and the public on the other side has their own perception on these duties. However, not all public understand the auditors' respective responsibilities. The higher expectation from the public is that an auditor should prevent or detect fraud, not knowing that an auditor has some certain limitations during undertaking their statutory duties. You see, people fail to understand

different types of audits when they appointed an auditor as their client. That is why most of them expect auditors to do many things outside the audit scope and objectives which result in the existence of AEG in Nigeria” (Participants 5 & 8, Professional Body).

The view of Participant 6, also a member of the professional body has provided the following comments regarding factors that contribute to AEG existence in Nigeria. He said:

“The factors that really contribute to this gap (AEG) as per my personal view is the lack of adequate knowledge of what audit entails among various users of the audit report. You see, most of the peoples fail to differentiate the role of auditors and that of management in corporate responsibility. So, this lack of knowledge from users leads them to relate management role as to auditors. I think this misunderstanding is the main issue that causes this gap in Nigeria”. (Participant 6, Professional Body)

Participant 7, (Professional Body) has also added to the above view concerning factors that contribute to the existence of AEG by acknowledging that:

“... you see, most of the users of financial statements are lacking auditing knowledge because their expectation when there is a fraud in an organization is the auditors’ role to uncover such fraud. Secondly, the background on which the users come from also contributes to the gap. Some of the users are not financially literate so really there must be a lack of understanding of the role and responsibility of auditors.”

Next section presents participants’ perceptions of possible ways to reduce the AEG.

4.2 Perceptions on possible ways to reduce the audit expectation gap

Several opinions were elucidated from the participants’ opinions regarding the possible ways to reduce the existence of AEG in Nigeria. The finding indicates – educating the public concerning the roles of auditors and the function of an audit is one among the greatest ways to reduce the AEG in Nigeria. In addition, the findings show that the AEG could be reduced through the application and use of ISA 700 into financial reporting practice in Nigeria, provision of audit education, financial literacy program, and improve in audit quality. The ways to reduce the existence of AEG as noted from the expert opinions are illustrated below.

“... I start by saying educating the users of financial statements and the public at large about the roles and responsibilities of external auditors is one of the important ways of reducing such gaps in Nigeria. You see, the government needs to come in and to educate people to be specific regulators need to educate society through public enlightenment on what is the requirement of the law regarding audit practice, what is the requirement of the standards as per as auditing guideline as a concern. I think this would serve as the better way of reducing the issues of AEG”. (Participant 12, Accounting Practitioners)

Participant 3, (Regulatory Body) also shown that:

“... well, I think one of the ways in which this gap could be reduced is improving the auditing standards and regulations guiding the auditing profession in Nigeria. Then professional bodies have the roles to play in educating the public. The regulator of accounting practice should also checkmate the activities of auditors to insure they have quality work. Another point to consider in reducing AEG is that IFAC recently comes up with ISA 700 which deals with Key Audit Matters (KAM) with more informative information and explanation in the auditors’ report. So, I believe if we take the ISA 700 into our financial reporting practice in Nigeria could possible improved users understanding both the responsibility of auditors and management and would reduce the issues of AEG”.

The view of one participant from the professional body (participants 4) is like the regulatory body’s assertions. The explanation from the participant is noted in the following comments:

“I think the best way to reduce AEG in Nigeria is raising awareness by the regulatory bodies. The regulators and professional bodies ICAN and the FRCN jointly should provide training for the audit staff, seminars to make awareness of the users of financial statements and the public. Correspondingly, provide a guideline to sue any external auditors for negligence will be a good step. Also, providing a strong corporate governance structure in an organization. The FRCN, CBN and SEC as regulators to

issue mandatory audit rotation among the audit partners of a company, this will also serve as a basis to enhance the audit quality in Nigeria” (Participant 4, Professional Body)

Participant 5, (Professional Body) he makes the following point:

“... the regulatory bodies should create awareness about the role and responsibility of external auditors in Nigeria. Professional accounting bodies ANAN and ICAN should come in and intensify effort in organizing a general sensitization program to the public. Similarly, our universities and polytechnic should try in educating the students on the roles and responsibilities of an auditor. Another point is the provision of media publication through one of the National Newspaper”.

The perceptions of participant 9 and 10 who are accounting practitioners stated that:

... I think the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) as professional accounting body should organize seminars and workshop to educate users of financial statements on what the role of an auditor is all about – I am sure this can serve as a better way of reducing the AEG issues in Nigeria” (Participants 9, Accounting Practitioners).

“My personal view regarding the ways to reduce the AEG issues in Nigeria is through the provision of auditing education. I am saying education because when you educate users of financial statements will tend to break up the culture that is in people mind from their diverse expectation on audit” (Participant 10, Accounting Practitioners).

Participant 11, (*Accounting Practitioners*) shared a similar view with participant 5 regarding the ways to reduce the AEG. He said:

“I am saying public enlightenment because when you enlighten users of financial statements will tend to break up the culture in their mind from their perceptions on auditors’ responsibilities. In the explanation of the participant continue: “I think the best ways to reduce AEG is through the followings public enlightenment: Enlightenment on the role and responsibility of the external auditor. Enlighten about the role of the auditor for fraud prevention and detection. I am sure with this public enlightenment – I believed the gap (AEG) can be reduced if not eliminated”.

Next section present discussion and conclusions.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis confirmed the evidence about the nature of AEG existence in Nigeria associated with low-level financial literacy among the users of financial statements, lack of public knowledge about the function of an audit and the roles of auditors, user’s unreasonable expectations on auditors. The need to educate users of financial statements and the public about the object of an audit is important to safeguard the value of the auditing profession. The analysis further acknowledged the gaps could reduce through the provision of audit education, financial literacy program, enlightening the users and the public on the function of an audit, enlighten the public on the roles and responsibilities of an auditor, media – enlightenment, and through the application of ISA 700 into financial reporting practice in Nigeria. The results are like the findings of Innes, Brown and Hatherly (1997) which revealed the influence of standards audit report and long-form audit report as one of the effective ways in reducing the AEG. Similarly, Gold et al. (2012) found ISA 700 has a significant impact on reducing AEG. Our finding is also similar on the adoption of ISA 700 into financial reporting practice and is a step forward in reducing the issues of AEG in Nigeria. The study provides new evidence of reducing the AEG from developing country such as Nigeria and it offers insight to the regulatory bodies on how adoption and use of ISA 700 could be affected towards reducing the issue of AEG. In view of that, our findings suggest that regulators and professional bodies should intensify effort to enlighten the users of financial statements specifically shareholders and the general public regarding the function of audit and roles and responsibilities of auditors. The findings might have practical implications to regulators on how the adoption of ISA 700 could be affected to improve users understanding auditors’ reporting model in Nigeria.

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Virtual internship programme: A curriculum innovation

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Abstract

Virtual internship programme allows students to obtain real-world work experience in a business environment anytime, anyplace, and at any pace. Participants in virtual internship programmes have the flexibility of working from home or school using personal or campus computing facilities. As long as the student has a phone, Internet and fax, he/she can work from virtually anywhere. Instructors can meet with their interns online to provide guidance and feedback. Most significantly, virtual internships eliminate geographical barriers and let students gain expertise and learning from instructors and business professionals from anywhere. Many businesses today are accepting students doing virtual internship programmes at their firms. Nevertheless, it is found that less research has been done to study these issues, proving that there is a knowledge gap issue in this area of study. This paper therefore presents the emerging opportunity and need for virtual internship program in future, based on the digital working era, where there is a crucial need to revise and redesign the assessment rubric which can be used to assess virtual internship programmes.

Keywords: Virtual internship, internship, practicum training

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, employers and students alike have widely accepted the internship as a method for students to gain work experience in real world organisations. Interns, who are prospective employees can demonstrate that they can perform work and relate with others in a work environment, thereby increasing the likelihood of them being offered a job after graduation (Eneriz, 2019; Parker, 2019).

Alike other professional degree programmes in general, the pressure to produce work-ready graduates among accounting degree programmes has been highlighted (Jackson and Chapman, 2012). The scarce in suitably skilled graduates (Sondergaard and Murthi, 2012) continues to be highlighted by graduate employers as well as the accounting profession. The lack of values includes technical skills (Boyce et al., 2012; Gray and Collison, 2002), lack of appropriately contextualised work-experience opportunities (Fleming, 2008; Guile and Griffiths, 2001), and limited soft-skill development opportunities (Fleming, 2008).

Nevertheless, looking through the spy glass of employers, internships may be a cost-effective answer to the expenses associated with recruiting new hires. Moreover, studies show that graduates seeking jobs can increase their likelihood of being hired and improve their potential earnings if they have completed an internship placement (Black and Bachman, 2007). Moreover, internships are recognized as important components of higher education, combining classroom learning and experiential learning (Clitero & Levenson, 1986; Stanton, 1992). Thus, students who have completed an internship get the opportunity to grab the position offered in their field soon after graduation (McDaniel & White, 1993; Kaman & Kretovics, 1999, Henry, Razzouk, & Hoverland, 1988).

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However, there are some problems and issues concerning the traditional way of doing internship. One of the major issues on the traditional internship faced by employers includes the inability to expand internship opportunities for interns and the choice of interns for employers from those found within the radius of a local commute to nearly anywhere in the world. Moreover, during the Covid 19 pandemic situation, remote and virtual choice of working nature was much preferred and may be the solution for the employers and interns who need to abide by the Work From Home instructions by the Malaysian Government (<https://www.mkn.gov.my/web/ms/sop-pkp-pemulihan>). In addition, many students must work a full- or part-time job in addition to their higher institution's project requirements and family responsibilities. Many students are facing a hard time to cope with these issues thus completing a traditional internship for these students is very challenging (Black and Bachman, 2007).

Virtual internship programme therefore can help students to avoid scheduling conflicts while gaining valuable experience in the real world of work. Video conferencing and virtual classroom technologies allow communications between students, employer and faculty to support and guide interns with an immediacy and frequency impossible to match in face-to-face meetings or telephone exchanges. Asynchronous learning platforms enable interns to submit assignments, read the work of others, comment on the contributions of others and share advice and experiences while off-campus. The relevant virtual communication tools used in most businesses today deem necessary for workplace success.

2. VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP

Many businesses today are accepting students doing virtual internship programmes at their firms. Participants in virtual internship programs have the flexibility of working from home or school using personal or campus computing facilities. As long as the student has a smart device and internet, he/she can work from virtually anywhere. Instructors can meet with their interns online to provide guidance and feedback. Most significantly, virtual internships eliminate geographical barriers and let students gain expertise and learning from instructors and business professionals from anywhere.

Virtual internship also allows students to work remotely and work on their own schedule. They communicate and collaborate in a virtual workspace - no matter where they live or what time zone they are in. Interns are virtually linked with the institution and the world of work. Industries benefit from having (a) the interns/faculty work on real world projects which make a direct contribution to industrial productivity, (b) direct access to the faculty experts in the participating college/university and (c) virtual employees at minimal cost. In addition to this, benefits to the college/university include (a) faculty development through their involvement with the interns in the on-going real-time projects in the industry, (b) feedback from the industry on the curriculum and (c) consultancy opportunities (Black and Bachman, 2007).

Another virtual internship concept which is an immersive virtual workplace simulation, is built based on the technical strength of traditional programmes whilst concurrently fostering the development of well-contextualised workplace-related soft-skills in an immersive virtual workplace setting. Developing technologies have improved the variety and functionality of mixed reality technologies. A model on the virtual internship was developed that allows students to gain technical expertise within a virtual workplace setting without prioritising vocational training over educational outcomes. (Bayerlein, 2015).

Figure 1 shows the concept of virtual internships designed to exploit the similarity between the challenges faced by students and interns (Black and Bachman, 2007). When students assume the role of interns, learning- and work-related activities are blended into an immersive scenario in which solutions to learning challenges enable work challenges to be addressed. Virtual internships develop students' technical knowledge and workplace-related soft-skills by framing peer-interactions, the engagement with resource materials, and the relationship between students and the academic in an immersive virtual workplace simulation. Through their role as interns, students explore real-world work challenges in a nonthreatening environment whilst receiving mentorship and peer-support from the academic and their fellow interns.

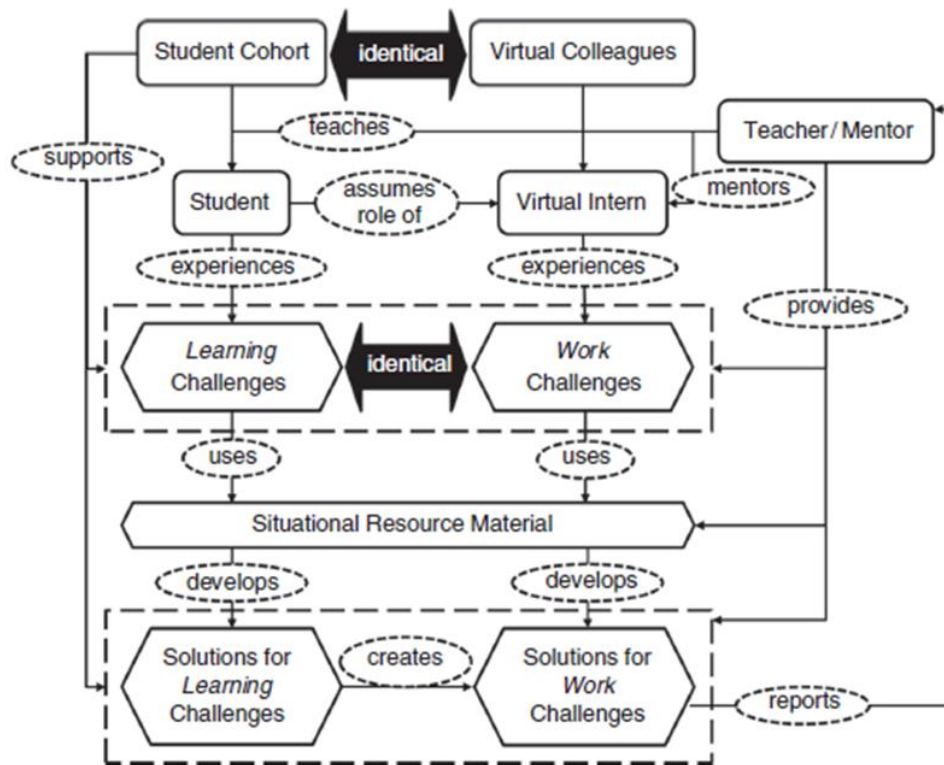


Fig. 1. Virtual internship concept

However, this paper is more focused on the virtual internship which involves students engaged with a real company virtually, getting to communicate and getting feedback using virtual communication platforms used in most universities for online classes, creating a virtual internship setting which could solve problems related to the inability to expand internship opportunities for interns at international companies anywhere in the world.

3. PEDAGOGICAL GAP IN VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP

Prior studies in internship focused on the interns and on success factors or satisfaction from the intern's perspective (Beard & Morton, 1998; Franks & Oliver, 2012; Greer, 2013; Jeske & Axtell, 2013) Several studies also focused on the intern's supervisor's experience and issues affecting success or satisfaction of the intern particularly on interpersonal working relationships among internship participants (Gardner, 2013; Youngblood, 2020).

On the other hand, studies on virtual internships is very lacking, while Youngblood (2020) tried to fill the gap and studied on how student interns and intern supervisors can establish and sustain a working relationship by communicating via remote communications technologies, His study contributes to understanding in this area that is of importance to a wide range of theorists, researchers, businesses, academic institutions, and practitioners.

Virtual internship therefore seems to be able to provide employers and students with opportunities unconstrained by geography while easing requirements such as finding a place to work, commuting, and time management issues. However, a virtual internship may have issues associated being unfamiliar with a work community but unable to join that community physically, and the need for supervisors, interns, and co-workers to establish and sustain a working relationship while being unable to meet in-person.

Synchronous and asynchronous communication technologies may help alleviate some of the problems associated with directing and appraising student internships. Instructors recognize that technology use for teaching can augment pedagogy (Althaus, 1997, Laurillard, 1987; McComb, 1994) and assist interns during their internship in regards to communication between interns, employers and university faculty thus enable interns to grab better placement in today's competitive job markets (Palmer, Collins, & Roy, 1996). The opportunity to offer virtual

internships using computer-mediated communication is particularly promising when the internship placement is valued as an academic class worthy of pedagogical improvement.

Nevertheless, it is found that less research has been done to study these issues, proving that there is a knowledge gap issue in this area of study. According to Youngblood (2020) virtual internship has not been well studied despite being able to offer advantages over other in-person trial work. Therefore, research is needed to explore the concept and nature of this relatively new innovative curriculum. It is also important to understand how participants establish and sustain working relationships remotely as this particular issue has not been extensively focused in past research, taking into consideration how the innovation can be crucial to the internship's success.

4. ASSESSMENT GAP IN VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP

4.1 Assessment of traditional accounting degree programmes in Malaysia during pandemic

Traditional undergraduate accounting degree programmes are often focused on training, rather than education (Boyce, 2004; Evans, 2010). Traditional programmes are focused on training because the mastery of technical knowledge is widely regarded as their most important learning outcome (Boyce et al., 2012; Gray and Collison, 2002). Given that a training focus implies that learning activities are aimed at the development of a narrow set of technical skills for subsequent repetition in the workplace (Evans, 2010), Improvements in the workplace readiness of graduates would be expected. However, traditional degree programmes continue to be criticised for their inability to create work-ready graduates (Howieson, 2003; Rosenberg et al., 2012; Sondergaard and Murthi, 2012).

In addition to this general criticism, traditional degree programmes are seen to lack soft-skill development opportunities (Gray and Collison, 2002), as well as contextualised learning activities that encourage students to engage with the profession (Fleming, 2008; Guile and Griffiths, 2001).

In one of the Malaysian universities, students in the Bachelor of Accounting programme will undergo their internship program during their final semester (8th semester) of their study. During the semester affected by the Covid 19 pandemic, students are advised to opt to work from home if the employers allow them therefore their nature of internship was conducted remotely (or virtually).

The employers need to fill in the assessment form provided by the faculty, to evaluate the students and to grade them. The assessment rubric used however was based on the normal internship programs structure which was not designed to suit the virtual/remote internship programme.

Based on the report for semesters (affected by the pandemic), employers which had to conduct their internship supervision virtually/remotely, could not give a reasonable score to the traits which they could not assess due to the nature of virtual/remote internship particularly the traits for leadership and teamwork. Therefore, students obtained 0 or low score for these traits thus affecting the fairness of the assessment in overall. This proves that there is an assessment gap issue which therefore need to be a focus of study.

With the emerging opportunity and need for virtual internship program in future, based on the digital working era, there is a crucial need to revise and redesign the assessment rubric which can be used to assess virtual internship programs. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of virtual internship programme to students and to recommendation for the creation of a rubric to assess the virtual internship program in the settings of the Malaysian Bachelor Accounting students.

5. CONCLUSION

Undergraduate accounting programmes are conceptualised as educational activities aimed at the integrated development of technical knowledge and workplace-related soft-skills. Following recommendations in the literature (Boyce, 2004), virtual internships are designed as immersive scenario-based learning environments that utilise proven strategies to achieve highly contextualised learning outcomes (Tacıgın, 2020). This focus ensures that the strengths of traditional undergraduate accounting programmes are incorporated into a contemporary learning model that addresses the concerns of students and employers. This paper focuses on the possibilities to evaluate the effectiveness immersive assessment of designed virtual internship concerning learning, written report, attitude, and project for the different level learners or students, employer's perspective and lecturer's perspective this virtual internship was settled to teach stages becoming as professional accountant in the field.

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Behind Brainsy Bunch International School Success: What Did They Do?

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Abstract

International schools are competing among themselves not only of varying fees but also in terms of their teaching staffs, their orientation of its curriculum, exit examinations available to primary school leavers, flexible learning spaces, second language learning and even rebranded the school with notable brand like Apple (Saba, 2020). To remain relevant, the education business generally has to be dynamic in balancing its profitable status and fulfilling the social purpose i.e. national education mission and vision. This phenomenon raised the question on how to remain relevant and sustain in education business for international school? The suitable and in time strategies have to be actively reviewed and placed to compete in the education business market without jeopardising the social economic mission and vision. Among the important areas taken care by international school like BBIS are financial sustainability, full fledge facility, high quality teachers and teaching, interesting syllabus and curriculum, effective marketing strategy and assuring low staff turnover.

Keywords: BBIS, international schools, quality education, education business.

1. INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic development of a country is highly dependent on educational sector. A well-designed educational system could equip students with knowledge, skills advancement and human capabilities that are important for their employment readiness and character development. As such, selecting the best educational institutions and curriculum are essential among parents for their children. Of late, Malaysia is seeing an increase in demand for English-speaking education as English is classified as one of the languages that is widely spoken and commonly used around the world. Serve as one of the educational institutions that uses English as medium of instructions, the total number of students attending international schools in Malaysia has increased by 80% by which the majority are local Malaysian children. Likewise, these children's parents emphasize the importance of international and private schools' syllabus, environment and facilities (Yaacob et al., 2014).

The market demand for international schools in Malaysia is indeed encouraging. From the world's university perspective, an English-medium international schools are increasingly valued. In Canada, 70% of all international undergraduate students come from international schools. The students were described as meeting all of the Canadian University requirements; well prepared to mix and participate, have very good facility of English language, and have been exposed to internationally recognized curricula (Keeling, 2015b). Parents looking at opportunities to send their children for tertiary education abroad are seriously weighing in international school as one of the best options.

Market intelligence and data on Malaysia's international schools collected and evaluated by The International School Consultancy Group (ISC), a UK-based organization which has been researching the worldwide international school market for over 25 years shows in their latest report that there were 122 English-medium international schools in Malaysia teaching a total of 46,130 students and employing over 4,500 full time staff. Kuala Lumpur has the largest number of international schools; 27 are located in the city educating over 15,000

students. Other major centers for international schools are Penang and Iskandar (Keeling, 2015b). The number of international school has increased rapidly whereby in year 2020, ICS identified 287 international schools in Malaysia, 43% growth in just six years (Saba, 2020). Saba (2020) added that the demand has been particularly for the mid priced school.

As in ISC report, Saba (2020) reported that Malaysian students represented the largest proportion of enrollment in the international schools particularly 65% of the total enrollment in mid-market for their school fees.

International school hence has been a staple in major cities in Malaysia and are an educational option for many economically privileged families. Further, to remain relevant, the education business generally has to be dynamic in balancing its profitable status and fulfilling the social purpose i.e. national education mission and vision. This phenomenon raised the question on how to remain relevant and sustain in education business for international school?

1.1 Background of Brainy Bunch International School (BBIS)

One of the established education centers for elementary and kindergarten chosen by many parents in Malaysia is Brainy Bunch International School. It is registered as an International School with the Ministry of Education and certified as a Cambridge Exam Centre. It is the first school in Malaysia to offer both and Montessori education. Brainy Bunch is a leading education institution with a commitment to provide sought after graduates possessing the highest level of ADAB (Allah centered, Determination, Action-oriented, Benevolence) and essential life skills. Life skills subjects are offered as part of the curriculum such as Money Tree (financial literacy), Practical Life and self-defense program.

There are over 140 kindergarten branches across Malaysia, a private primary and secondary schools in Putrajaya as well as several in some states of Malaysia. BBIS since its establishment in year 2010 has received many awards, such as The World's Best Brand and Star Outstanding Business Award in 2017. BBIS also accredited by North American Montessori Center, Cambridge Assessment International Education and LEGO Education Solutions.

BBIS is now expanding its business abroad by franchising system forwarding its education business models with full support to the franchisees. With more the 50,000 alumni accumulated until recent, it is vital to carry out a study seeking to explore and understand the BBIS business model, their strengths, strategies, and challenges to sustain in the private elementary school in Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the borderless world, people sought for internationalisation. There are two main aspects of growing international if education; the internationalisation of national system and the growth numbers of international schools worldwide (Hayden et al., 2011). Kraft and Vodopoviec (2003) argued that private/ international school can help mobilise resources and increase the quality and accessibility of business education. A review of the empirical research on private school choice found that private school choice delivers some benefits to participating students—particularly in the area of educational attainment (Jacob et al. 2008; Egalite and Wolf, 2016).

Indeed, parents always sought for quality/ better education and perceived that English as the medium of instruction is one of the indicators of better education which influence parents to choose private school (Herlech-Jones et al., 2005; Deepak Kumar et al., 2020). It is also still a result of family tradition whereby private education is reinforced among those parents who were also educated in the private schools (Brian Greets et al., 1990).

In addition, Handerson et al. (2020) claim that “facilitating subjects’ which were taught in private/ international school are known to be favoured by high status higher educational institution. They also found that the students enjoyed the privilege of extremely well resources compared to state schools. And they are competing among them in resource provision for the students. In adverse, Mancebón et al. (2008) claimed that in the case of Italy, the private school obtain better academic results because of their favourable background of the educational process not as the consequences of effect of more effective management.

Besides the medium of instructions, curriculum and etc., Giovanis et al. (2013) stated that price is one of the most important variables in the process of customers’ purchase decision. Implying to the school fees, the future growth of the international schools market is very much dependent on how many people can afford to pay (Keeling, 2015a). However, parents still enrolls their children if they found the school is commensurate and cost effective

to them (Winkler et al., 1996). As the international school expanded and grow rapidly, the demand goes to mid-priced schools among the parents (Saba, 2020).

In addition to the fees, Caffyn (2010) emphasizes the importance of location as it significantly influences the reactions to physical environment, local culture and clientele. Moreover, location enclave affects individual's experience and interaction in the locality which indirectly influences their behavior, satisfaction, morale and interest. International schools should be located in a strategic area and within convenient distance (Yaacob et al., 2014). There is evidence that the gap between schools' outcomes is higher in localities with higher private sector growth, providing suggestive evidence of stratification (Joshi, 2020). In addition, location enable parents and community members to involve in the reform to increase academic achievement, enabling school structure as well as academic optimism to establish a culture of success in elementary and secondary school (Waheed et al., 2016).

Awan and Zia (2015) found that five main factors emerge as important determinants of private school/international school choice. These include the socioeconomic status of the household, the degree of a school's accessibility, the cost of schooling, parents' perceptions of school quality, and their perceptions of the available employment opportunities in the region. International schools are competing among themselves not only of varying fees but also in terms of their teaching staffs, their orientation of its curriculum, exit examinations available to primary school leavers, flexible learning spaces, second language learning and even rebranded the school with notable brand like Apple (Saba, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

In a research project which explores a subject for the first time such that will be explored in this study, researchers need a qualitative stage to build understanding. A small number of in-depth interviews will give a feel for the subject, the terminology which is used, constructs that need testing, and understand how the audience sees the world (Hague et al., 2013). This is vital information for designing a questionnaire in a subsequent quantitative stage.

So, the major initial data collection for this study was carried out through interview session with Brainy Bunch International Islamic Montessori School (BBIS). During the interview, open ended questions werw asked to deeply understand their business model, pricing, their financial performance, the service they offered as well as their strengths and weaknesses to sustain in the education business.

Employing thematic analysis, the data then analysed by using Atlas.ti, latest version available.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Financial Sustainability

First of all, the clear vision as a profit oriented private school by the school's CEO makes the school highly successful and able to sustain financially. The school mainly gets the initial capital from their established chain of Brainy Bunch kindergartens across Malaysia, Singapore, Gaza and Indonesia (143 in total). In order to attract many students into the international school, the management team set the school fees as among the lowest in the region, with full facility and inclusive of accomodation and food. The school operates from 7.45 till 4.30pm where parents do not have to worry about transit school in the evening as BBIS took care of the children Islamic lesson as well. This value for money approach has attracted 740 students just after 5 years of operation, starting with only 60 students at the beginning.

“For lower elementary, we charged about RM1100. For high school, we charged about RM1,300. And for hostel is about RM1,500.. we give more, especially for Tahfiz students, in MCO, we provide with the boarding and hostel. Within charge, like a big part in the price, we adjust more on their food and accommodation. So, with the low fees, what keep us afloat and sustainable is mostly on the number... because we don't charge a lot.”

[Madam Nori, COO of BBIS]

The school also has its loyalty program and free education program where parents are given the option to pay in lump sum for their children's education fees for example, RM50,000 covering the whole education at Brainy Bunch International School (BBIS) and RM100,000 investment scheme in which the parents will get back the amount they invested after their chindren finished schooling. This loyalty program not only ensure the school can

keep the students with them without worrying that they will change to other school, but also keeps the cash flow of the school healthy by having cash to spend and develop the school more to make it more enticing for future parents.

On the other hand, in order to keep the cost low, the school have a central kitchen that caters the food for all students under Brainy Bunch. The salary of the teacher also is not too high as 99% of the teachers are locals with suitable qualification. The range of the teachers salary are from RM1800 to RM5000, lower than the more expensive expatriate international teachers. BBIS proved that they can succeed as international school even without international teachers.

4.2 Full Fledge Facility

BBIS was built on a huge plot of land (2.5 hectares) in Cyberjaya. With open plan concept, the school have a warm and welcoming atmosphere where staff, visitors and students really enjoy. They have a great hall that could accommodate 2000 packs, an auditorium that could accommodate 250 packs, football field, animal farm, horses barn, and a lake that are normally used by their Tahfiz students to go fishing. Because of the open plan and big space that they had, there are many possibilities for various activities to be carried out and these activities are the value added to the international school, as explained by Puan Nori.

“We have an auditorium that can sit about 250, 200 packs...we also had a great hall that accommodate 2000 packs. We do a lot of events there, but we also conduct a lot of classes in there. For example, we do event like Language Week, BM Week. We used auditorium probably for a movie setting, you know. Because, it does look like a cinema, but we also used it for classes, especially when we need to combine few classes. The feature of the school that I like is the open space. We have a big field, and thing just progress naturally again. When we have the big field, we have the lesson called “Advance Practical Life”. We make the student to feel like living in a small farm, and we started to include farm animals in there. And the teacher can utilise that as part of their Science lesson, Life Skills lesson, where they bring the student down to feed the animals. Somebody approach us to do horse riding courses, so we have some horses in our barn. And then, we have archery because of the space. These are the things that are not initially thought of, but because of the space. In term of our field, it is designed to accommodate a proper competition. Our field is used as a training accommodation for Sepang Football Club. So, it opens up to a lot of another possibilities. But in the end of the day, with this kind of facilities, it kind of add some value to the school, you know. And it had that atmosphere and aura that everybody like. Even the parents enjoying it, and even the teacher as well.”

[Madam Nori, COO BBIS]

4.3 High Quality Teachers and Teaching

Prior to hiring, potential teachers at the school are required to observe the classroom first to see if they can deal with the montessori system and teaching environment as they may have 20 students in the class, learning 20 different topics with different subject at the same time as it is a mixed aged classroom. Teachers are also hired not only based on their qualification, but also their personality and commitment. In the montessori system, one teacher could teach several subjects, but BBIS started hiring specialized teachers in their field for the the secondary level. Teachers of the international school are also constantly undergoing trainings to provide best teaching quality for the students.

“Because Cambridge, they do have like a periodical training. Depending on the terms, sometimes they just have ad-hoax training. We do send our teachers for Cambridge training. And for Montessori training is a little bit unique. So, like myself and Auntie Quds, we obtained our diploma in Montessori in North America Montessori Centre. Auntie Quds is assisted by two other seniors to do the training internally. So, we had training like on the job and we do have like a weekly training.”

[Mr. Fattah, Teacher and Administrator of BBIS]

4.4 Interesting Syllabus and Curriculum

BBIS adopted several syllabus and offers flexible learning plan for the students to choose their path. Mainly they start with the Montessori system, which is a non-exam based system for their elementary level. The students start at the age of 6, and by the age of 11, they have the option to go to the secondary school or they can stay for another year, afterwhitch they can also choose to join the Tahfiz program where they adopted a special method in

memorizing Al-Quran in one year. The montessori syllabus were also being adopted in their kindergartens, so when parents and students are comfortable with the system, they want continuation and hence join BBIS after their preschool. Montessori system itself is very exciting. Montessori system is about learning for knowledge and not for exam. Through the system which is close to the Islamic way of teaching, students are very self-reliance and independent. It is also very easy to incorporate Sunnah teachings, for example talk softly, and when they have their food they learn to clean their classroom. The students even started learning advance subjects such as Geography, History, Astrology, and Health Science in primary school and they learn for knowledge, which is a deep learning approach.

“Montessori, MashaAllah very amazing. Actually, very close to Islamic. When they asked about self-independent, self-reliance, Sunnah teaching we can easily incorporate. Like the Montessori way-talk softly, we teach them to behave, and low their voice when they talk. And when they have their food, they will clean their classroom. And even the subject, I think in the primary school, they started learning Geography, they learn History, Astrology, Health Science. They learn a lot of things we didn't even think of, that we teach to primary school students. They learn for knowledge.”

[Madam Nori, COO BBIS]

For the secondary level, where more exam based curriculum is needed, BBIS adopted the Cambridge system and students will take IGCSE exam at the end of their high school. BBIS is also a certified IGCSE exam centre so the exam are conducted at their own premises.

“So when we go to highschool, we can no longer stay with the Montessori system, basically because of the nature of the system itself. Because we need something yang ada exam-based, yang student can use to further their students. So, that is when we adopted the Cambridge system and we become the certified exam Cambridge centre. I think it was in 2015, if I am not wrong. So, before that...we send our students to UIA to take their IGCSE exam. But starting on 2015, when we become the certified exam centre for IGCSE, we can conduct our own exam at our premise.”

[Madam Nori, COO BBIS]

4.5 Effective Marketing Strategy

By keeping a good quality kindergarten and building strong branding and reputation from their kindergarten chain, BBIS does not have to do aggressive marketing to attract students to their international school. Most parents have already been asking what is next for their children and transitioning from Brainy Bunch Kindergarten into Brainy Bunch International School was rather a natural process. BBIS do not have a dedicated marketing team overseeing just the international school, as their focus is more on marketing their kindergarten chain. But somehow when they have a well-established kindergarten, they could market their international school as well.

“And we did not do a lot of marketing for international school actually. So, a lot of people don't know that we had international school. But, most of the students are students that have been with us for a while. And words that go around. We had the students by word of mouths.”

[Madam Nori, COO BBIS]

“The way we market ourselves is mostly through word of mouth and through the group CEO and the name Brainy Bunch itself. Like Auntie Nori said, I have never seen our advertisement for international school that much. It is mostly on the kindergarten.”

[Mr. Fatah, Teacher and Administrator of BBIS]

The school target market was on upper middle class Malay parents having income of RM10,000/month or more per household, which is those from the M40 and T20 categories in which is a realistic target where these parents could afford private education for their children. However, as being pointed earlier, the school mostly rely on their existing customers that progresses from their kindergarten into high school. Even though the marketing strategy of the school is subtle, the long-term approach in building reputation and getting the trust of their existing customers has proven to be effective for the school as it thrives even during the MCO.

4.6 Low Staff Turnover

The school's teachers work with BBIS for long period of time. Low teachers turnover means quality of teaching and the school culture can be maintained. It also means lower cost for keep training new teachers as they are already familiar with the system. Among the reason of why teachers stay at the school is because BBIS system and way of doing things is so unconventional that the teachers find it interesting to work there. One of the teachers also quoted to stayed at the school for 9 years now because of the uniqueness of Motessori system that the school adopt. They also have a good career progression opportunity and BBIS even sponsor some of the teachers to further their study and learn more about international school syllabus as well as having on the job training as mentioned previously. The school also have a flexible system, where teachers and parents are open to discuss about their children progress and learning pace in which teachers offers alternatives. The flexibility is also what keeps the teachers at the school for long period of time as explained by Mr Fatah:

"I have been with Brainy Bunch, this is my fourth or fifth year. I worked at a school before, so it is a natural progression to be a school teacher, English to be specific. One of the main reasons why I am still working with Brainy Bunch is because of its informality and its way of doing thing. Very not conventional. If you asked about how we employed teachers and everything, we do have certain standard, but we are always flexible when it comes to our staff. Say for example, high school. We have our kids; we have certain amount of subjects that they want to take for IGCSE. But in the ends, it is up to the parent, and not the kids. They feel like they can do that particular year, or not. If they do not feel like they can do that particular year, we are open for discussion. We have a lot of other possibilities. So that flexibility is one of the main reasons why I really like working with Brainy Bunch. Even though very hectic at one time even though it gets to your head a bit, but that is one of the main reasons."

[Mr Fatah, Teacher and Administrator of BBIS]

5. CONCLUSION

The international schools are growing rapidly around the world as a result of people mobility and the change in education orientations. With the dynamic growth and demand of the international schools, this education providers have to remain steadfast to cope with the current change to remain relevant and sustainable. The suitable and in time strategies have to be actively reviewed and placed to compete in the education business market without jeopardising the social economic mission and vision. Among the important areas taken care by international school like BBIS are financial sustainability, full fledge facility, high quality teachers and teaching, interesting syllabus and curriculum, effective marketing strategy and assuring low staff turnover.

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Pilot Testing on Leader-Member Relationships and Hospital Performance in A General Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine

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Abstract

This research explores followers' characteristics from doctors' perspectives and the leader-member exchange imperative in the Hospital of Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine's performance. LMX theory is employed in this article. This study's focus groups comprised 10 participants, including five leaders and five members from the hospital. This research found that doctor followers' conscientiousness impacted the quality of LMX and their performance. Moreover, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion were linked to positive affect, while neuroticism and narcissism was linked to negative affect. Finally, positive affection positively impacts LMX and vice versa. The present study included two potential research limitations. First, personality was measured by the Big Five Factors; thus, the previous researchers could not analyze it in the real world. Second, although the researcher did have two sources of data (such as the doctor leader and doctor member), it is a possibility that the data collection may have influenced some of the proposition's relationships because the data collected was limited. On the other hand, the study found that followers' conscientiousness determined that the quality of LMX significantly impacted LMX and their performance. Leaders' conscientiousness and extroversion can positively impact LMX.

Keywords: Big five model, LMX theory, followers characteristics, a General Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, hospital performance

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, progress in medicine and the renewal of therapeutic methods have improved the quality of patient treatment. Despite this, the number of medical accidents has increased; hence, reducing the probability of medical accidents has aroused the attention of medical academics (Lerner,1978). According to data from the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China (NHC), medical disputes in 2013 reached about 70, 000 cases. In 2014, 115000 cases of medical disputes were recorded, and patient safety remained severe (Shepherd,2014). Efforts to create a patient safety culture have centered on developing improved processes and adopting technology rather than exploring team relationships and exploring team relationships and leader influences (Edmondson et al., 2001). This article stresses the role of the leader-member relationship in creating a patient safety culture.

The Big Five Traits, also known as the Big Five Factor Model (FFM), consist of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extroversion, openness to experience, and neuroticism, also called emotional stability (McShane & Von, 2015). Previous research has shown that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion have a positive relationship with LMX, whereas neuroticism has a negative relationship with LMX. According to Dansereau et al. (1975), leaders should develop high-quality relationships with their followers but not all. The outcomes of these

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relationships, in-group members, and leaders share more private time, energy, and resources from both organizations and the private sector (Schein, 2010). Outgroup members have job-related relationships.

Additionally, LMX relationships can be formed in different dimensions for many reasons and under different conditions (DeLeon, 2012). In other words, relationships can be developed across different dimensions. This study focuses on two constructs consisting of three dimensions for the in-group and two dimensions for the out-group. According to Agarwal (2012), the LMX group has three dimensions:

Contribution	performs that follower's behaviour in the mutual work task with their leaders.
Loyalty	Leaders and followers can support each other in public.
Affective	simply liking each other.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Patient safety culture

Patient safety culture is defined as the product of individual and group values, attitudes, competencies, and patterns of behavior that determine the commitment to, and style and proficiency of, the organization's health and safety programs (Upadhyay et al., 2020). This study examined the relationship between physicians' leaders and their staff and how these relationships influence patient safety culture. It used secondary data analysis to test a model that explains the influence of leader-member relationships on employees' performance and hospital performance. It is convenient to collect data because researchers are hospital managers.

2.2 Data and sample

This research aims to fundamentally determine the impacts of followers' characteristics on LMX by using LMX theory and the characteristic features of the Big Five Factors model. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions related to FFM and LMX theories were applied to the discussion of these two groups. There were forty-one interview questions, including three basic questions; the others were follow-up questions. Employing a face-to-face interview is the better way to know the verbal and non-verbal quest towards interviewees, in addition to being a better way to capture the interviewees' uncomfortable feelings towards the questions (Bond, 2015). The interviewees will be full-time doctors working at the Hospital of Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and from different departments. The sample included five leaders and five members. Subsequently, each interviewee will introduce the Big Five Factors Model; if they have done the BFF test before, ask them the results and whether they satisfy the previous test; otherwise, the tests will be performed by those who have never done the BFF test. The results provided feedback to them.

As a result, a preliminary analysis of this study was obtained through interview transcripts generated from the two-focus group discussion. Further, the essential points related to detailed analysis and research objectives were abstracted, edited, and summarized in tabular format.

2.3 Hypnosis

For the pilot test, statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 16. Simple frequency distribution methods were used to analyse the data. The hypnosis is:

H1: Doctor followers' characteristics of different version, agreeableness, and conscientiousness can link positive affection and, in turn, positive LMX and their performance.

H2: Doctor followers' character of the different versions positively impacts the quality of affection and distributes it to LM X-Liking/Trust and their performance.

H3: Doctor followers' agreeableness positively impacts the quality of affection and distributes it to LMX - Loyalty and performance.

H4: Doctor followers' character of the different versions positively impacts the quality of affection and distributes it to LMX-linking LMX -contribution and their performance.

H5: Doctor followers' characteristics of neuroticism and narcissism negatively impact the quality of LMX and distribute these to the out-group dimension of LMX and their performance.

H6: Positive affection negatively affects LM and performance.

H7: Negative affection positively impacts LMX and performanceEnsure that you return to the 'Els-body-text' style, the style that you will mainly be using for large blocks of text, when you have completed your bulleted list.

3. DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Propositions Testing

The researcher utilized the discussion recording and aspects from participants to test all seven propositions step-by-step. As Table 1 summarizes, there are two predictive propositions and five nonpredictive propositions.

Table 1: Result of Proposition Testing

Propositions	Testing Result
P1: Followers' characters of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness can link positive affection, positive LMX, and their performance.	supported
P2: The follower's character of extraversion positively impacts the quality of affection and distributes it to LMX-Liking and their performance.	Impact not clear
P3: Follower's character of agreeableness positively impacts the quality of affection and distributes it to LMX-Loyalty and their performance.	Impact not clear
P4: Follower's character of extraversion positively impacts the quality of affection and distributes it to LMX-Liking LMX-contribution and their performance.	Supported
P5: Follower's character of neuroticism and narcissism negatively impact the quality of LMX and distribute these to out-group dimension of LMX and their performance.	supported
P6: Positive affection negatively impacts the LMX and their performance.	Not supported
P7: Negative affection positively impacts the LMX and their performance.	Not supported

3.2 Comparative analysis

This section of the comparative analysis explores followers' and leaders' perceptions of the impacts of the Big Five Factors. According to the interviewees' BFF results shown in Table 1, for the followers' group, their positive affections of conscientiousness and extraversion are lower than leaders' personalities, except for agreeableness personality, which is higher than leaders' perspectives. Regarding neuroticism, leaders' test results were higher than their followers. Most interviewees had higher openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraverts and lower openness to agreeableness and neuroticism.

3.3 Comparative analysis of big five results

The BFF results shared by interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into similarities and differences based on the characteristics of extraverts, conscientiousness, and agreeableness in the leaders' and followers' groups. The study focuses on four characteristics of the Big Five Factors; the researcher summarized the comparison between both groups in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviewees' BFF Result

Group	Significant Five Factors (High)					Done Test	BFF	Agree with the Result
	O	C	E	A	N			
Follower Group	3	3	3	2	0	5	4	
Leader group	4	3	5	1	2	5	4	
Summary	7	6	8	3	2	10	8	

Table 2 shows that neuroticism and extraversion characteristics are higher in the leaders' group than in the members' group. In the interviews, more leaders reflected that communication is important because they should be offered more trust and respect. In particular, followers are engaged in several organizational situations, such as asking for help with complex problems or other advice.

From the followers' perspective, agreeableness personality was higher than in the members' group. However, according to the members' group, performance is the most important way to measure LMX quality, regardless of agreeable personality. In other words, followers' agreeable personalities do not affect LMX.

3.4 Comparative analysis of LMX

Table 3: Comparative analysis of LMX

Focused Groups/LMX	Significant Five Factors (High)/Quality of LMX				
	C	E	A	N	Narcissism
Followers Group	Positive	Not clear	Not clear	Negative	Negative
Leaders Group	Positive	Positive	Negative	Negative	Negative

3.4.1 Conscientiousness----- LMX-Contribution

Generally, both groups agreed that conscientiousness was a vital characteristic of LMX quality. Conscientiousness can strongly reflect job performance, which is relevant to job contribution. Most followers responded that they had strong confidence in the quality of LMX and its high capabilities in the workplace. Similarly, leaders dislike members because most members cannot complete a task or project independently. However, the researcher considered that from the members' perspective, if members tend to build high LMX with their leaders, they should consistently have higher conscientiousness than their leaders.

3.4.2 Agreeableness (A) -----LMX—Loyalty

An employee's agreeableness is an essential factor that reduces turnover, increases job satisfaction, and improves task performance. On the other hand, each team in the organization aims to set up a coherent and one-goal group; therefore, agreeableness is vital for members. However, in the members' interview group, most reflected that most members showed low loyalty, although they had high-quality LMX. In contrast, leaders presented higher loyalty in the interviews, although they were clear with a lower degree of loyalty. Therefore, from this point of view, lower agreeableness can be reflected in members' perspectives.

3.4.3 Extraverts (E) ----- LMX—Liking/Trust

Regarding extroverts' characteristics, the two focus groups were at a high level. Regardless of the leader group or member group, extroverts keep having good dyadic communication, solving problems to develop and sustain the quality of LMX. However, the researcher found that in this study, members were not clear about the quality of LMX compared with leaders who responded that they believed there was high quality with their leaders. One leader responded that most members liked them because of their authority and leaders' abilities.

3.4.4 Neuroticism (N) and Narcissism ----LMX—Negative

Conversely, neuroticism and narcissism were attributed to the adverse effects of this study. Members with lower negative affection versus leaders, either from the BFF test results or their feedback during the interview. However, it is worth mentioning that leaders had a higher level of negative affection than members did.

3.5 Detailed analysis from follow-up questions

First, agreeableness is not essential from the perspective of leaders and members. Most leaders' feedback was that their followers worked for themselves, not for leaders or industries. Additionally, most followers had the same number of respondents. Leaders, not followers, decide one of the main reasons for having quality LMX. Another reason is that this study was conducted in Asia; all interviewees were Malaysians, and thus, hierarchy is an essential factor influencing follower feedback. For the leader's group, all leaders are loyal to their industries, while they have no confidence in their followers' loyalty because they believe that most followers work for themselves.

To further study the findings above, another finding is that followers do not clear on the quality of LMX with their leaders. However, most of them are extroverts, demonstrated either by test results or their answers in the group. Most leaders in the leader's group ensure positive LMX with their followers, although most are introverts. There are gaps between the tests and responses in the discussion. One reason is that all leaders were extraverted sometimes and introverted at other times; thus, followers cannot decide whether LMX is quality with their leader.

Furthermore, from both focused groups of interviews, positive affection did not negatively impact LMX. The researcher explains that all interviews are Chinese, meaning they will not think of the box. Another reason is that each focused group interview should be completed within 90 minutes with about 43 questions; that is, they do not have enough time to think deeply and discuss with other participants in the group. However, two of the interviewees from each group responded that negative affection possibly impacts positive affection; the member had graduated from a master's level in an overseas university and is now working in another country, while another leader had ever worked in an overseas country for many years. In addition, the two interviewees were open. In summary, the characteristics of openness and experience of fruits are essential for this study. Furthermore, there are some gaps with their previous responses; if they rejected that positive affection did not negatively impact LMX, there are some differences with the answers for Proposition 4. That means they did not know conscientiousness is attributed to positive affection, while in this research, no one asked what positive affection was. Another example is that at the end of the interview, the researcher asked about the definitions of neuroticism and narcissism; most did not know, and two participants answered part of the definition.

The researcher explained the above phenomenon as most Asian people stressed "face." Similarly, for most participants, negative affect did not positively impact LMX. One reason for this is that both interviews occurred at night; most were tired and had no energy to think much for the last three questions. Another reason is that Asians would not like to ask questions in the public environment, even in the online group, because of the "face" reasons mentioned earlier because most of them explained two terms just from one angle; for example, they demonstrated narcissism as self-centered, in effect, narcissism has three meanings which explained in Chapter Two. In addition, according to the interviewees' explanations, there were some gaps in the term neuroticism, which were described as anxiety, dispersion, and unhappiness. The low esteem for some issues can also be explained by neuroticism.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the response to the fundamental question, the Five Factors Model (FFM) indicated five personality traits that could reflect interviewees' characteristics. Most of the interviewees agreed with the BFF results. Three males and two females were involved in the leader group, and some interviewees disagreed with the BFF results. For example, a male doctor in the leader group said he was introverted, but the result was the opposite. In addition, in the member group, a female doctor disagreed with the test result because she had a strong sense of responsibility in the workplace.

There were some significant differences between the groups, with minor differences. Being in the leader's group, the results were extraverts. The very reason to be a leader is to deliver their opinions to their members and present the teams' results to their stakeholders. Leaders typically aim to coach members' continua to drag them to catch their performance. From a leadership perspective, leaders share points and help others grow up. This is the difference between members in which extraverts do not impact the quality of LMX. One reason is that organizations have a greater tendency towards members' performance, regardless of their advection ability. For instance, extreme extroverts tend to be dishonest, such as fake sales reports and advocating self-performance. However, regardless of the leader or member, the individual would have some negative affection toward their responses. Some narcissism will help members achieve challenging tasks and help leaders present their self-confidence before team members. Similarly, suitable neuroticism towards leaders and members will evaluate their challenging tasks and require them to be sensitive to economic changes and new principles by governments and competitors.

Based on proposition testing and detailed analysis, it is confirmed that conscientiousness positively impacts the quality of LMX and, therefore, hospital performance. Conversely, extroverts and agreeableness had no apparent impact on LMX quality. In addition, neuroticism and narcissism negatively affect LMX. Moreover, leaders' characteristics of extroverts positively impact the quality of LMX since it will affect the follower's production and contribution; that is, leader doctors should be good at communication. Next, this study found that the negative affections of neuroticism and narcissism negatively impact the quality of LMX from both leaders' and members' perspectives. However, there was still a slight impact on LMX quality. Namely, positive affection can negatively impact the quality of LMX and vice versa.

In the future, this article will be the first study to enhance our thought of how followers' differences in personality make organizations have a high sense of increasing followers' conscientious Freudenberg since it is associated

with followers' performance. Meanwhile, future researchers should enlarge the dimensions of followers' and leaders' traits in public hospitals and the private sector because both sectors have different cultures and work environments. Future researchers should employ cognitive and affective tests to obtain more accurate results, such as the DISC.

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