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Yongyudh Vajaradul
Editor
Interdisciplinary Research Review

The Social Construct of Compliments: Strategies of Meranaw College Students

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Abstract

Research reveals that there is a limited number of available local sources that deal with language use, particularly in the compliment behavior, of indigenous speakers in the Philippines. In addition, studies often generalize the language dichotomy across genders, overlooking the sociocultural variables that directly influence the linguistic behavior of speakers in a certain speech community. Thus, this paper aimed at critically investigating the compliment and compliment response strategies employed by selected Meranaw College students in the Philippines, and at examining the differences in their compliment behavior across genders. The investigation was participated by 70 Meranaw university students and the data were obtained using written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaires containing a total of 10 hypothetical scenarios. The results showed that both groups of participants strongly preferred using explicit and explanation strategies in giving compliments. Interestingly, four additional semantic formulas evident in the compliments of the participants were discovered: cultural and cultural references, using humor, conversation openers, and address terms. In returning a compliment, the results showed that male participants likely used agreeing utterances and offering utterances while the female participants tended to use appreciation tokens, shift credit, informative comments, return compliments, and downgrading utterances. Additionally, it highlights the discovery of two additional strategies in providing compliment response across genders: rhetorical questions and offering utterances. The results imply that Meranaws employ various strategies not only to strengthen the social ties among the interlocutors but also to uphold their cultural values and protect their maratabat or honor. Moreover, this work argues that the existence of language dichotomy across genders is largely affected by numerous sociocultural and religious factors present in one speech community. In the end, this investigation asserts the importance of understanding the socio-pragmatic variables present in intercultural communication to prevent the occurrence of miscommunication especially among speakers from diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: Meranaw, Speech Act, Compliment, Compliment Response, Language and Gender

1. Introduction

Pragmatics is essential in understanding how language use in human communication determines the conditions of society (Mey, 2001). Speech act is one of the central topics of inquiry in pragmatics (Huang, 2014) and is mainly concerned with the way words present an action and circumstances to people. Speech Acts hold much relevance in inter-ethnic communication by emphasizing that language is not merely a tool for conveying information but a means of performing actions and establishing social relationships.

Understanding the nuances of speech acts is crucial in the context of diverse cultural interactions. Different ethnic groups possess varied linguistic norms, social expectations, and contextual interpretations. Thus, awareness of cultural differences in politeness, indirectness, and face-saving strategies is vital, as does recognizing contextual cues and non-verbal communication because it serves as a guide for navigating these complexities, fostering mutual understanding, respect, and effective communication in inter-ethnic discourse by encouraging sensitivity to diverse speech acts and their cultural interpretations.

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Compliment and compliment responses are considered very vital in making or breaking interpersonal relationships (Berowa, 2020). Holmes (1988) defined compliments as "speech acts that explicitly or implicitly attribute credit to someone for some "good" (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) that the speaker and the hearer positively value" (p. 485). The study of compliment and compliment responses is important in broadening the notions of pragmatics about cross-cultural implications and interrelationships among social groups as it deemed to be "mirrors of cultural values" (Manes, 1983 as cited by Furkó & Dudás, 2012, p.136). There are notable studies in linguistics that emphasize the connection between compliments and culture such as Wolfson (1981) and Hyunh (2023) who observed how compliments differ across culture, serving distinctive functions in diverse social contexts.

In the Philippines, compliment and compliment strategies were examined by various researchers including Zhang (2013) on compliments in Philippine English, and Berowa (2020) on compliment and compliment response strategies among Meranaw students. Zhang (2013) explored the formulaic use of compliments in Philippine English, particularly at the syntactic and lexical levels, and found that Filipinos are more likely to accept compliments than to reject them. In 2020, Berowa discovered in her study that Meranaws make use of exclusive linguistic expressions to those people with whom they share with same ethnic membership and religious belief to foster solidarity and to maintain the universal notion of face in a high-context culture. Their studies mainly highlight the characteristics of compliment and compliment response strategies concerning pragmatics across social and ethnic usage.

Despite the attempts, the previous studies did not explore the gender-based differences in compliments and compliment responses in a sociocultural context. Gender is a major concern in the study of speech acts because it shows essential characteristics of speech patterns between male and female speakers (Berowa, Ella & Lucas, 2019). Their differences in language use reflect their cultural values, traditions, ideologies, religion, social norms, and unique attributes in expressing politeness and propriety in a social context. An understanding of gender differences in various speech communities, particularly in the use of compliments and compliment responses, not only strengthens and fosters solidarity between native speakers but also promotes understanding and connection between people from different speech communities.

Thus, this study was conducted to discover the compliment and compliment response strategies of Meranaw people, and to determine if there are differences in the strategies employed by this identified group in performing such speech acts across genders. This study illustrates that Meranaw people are heavily influenced by traditional norms and values that shape their language use and linguistic habits. In this paper, the researchers explored the different aspects of culture and traditions that Meranaw compliments and compliment responses entail such as religion and beliefs, norms, and social roles of males and females. Moreover, this investigation explored the challenges in performing such speech acts to provide a comprehensive discussion about the social and cross-cultural implications of the Meranaw language. This paper is centered on the analysis of gender-based differences in compliment and compliment response strategies among Meranaws and observes the linguistic construct as influenced by their socio-cultural beliefs and practices. This study would hopefully contribute to the body of literature about the compliment behavior of Meranaw speakers by diving into the influence of gender as socio-pragmatic factor in their compliment utterances. Furthermore, the researchers aspire that with this study, future researchers will be inspired to delve into the pragmatic lens of indigenous languages in Philippine context.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three theoretical perspectives: Speech Act Theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987), and Community of Practice of Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992). The Speech Act Theory views language as action, moving beyond the idea of language as a mere system of symbols. The theory makes the difference between *locutionary acts*, which deal with the meaning of the words; *illocutionary acts*, which

address what the speaker wants to achieve; and *perlocutionary acts* which refer to effect on the listener.

On the other hand, Politeness Theory centers on the concept of face or an individual's public self-image. It posits that people engage in politeness to maintain face. It has two aspects: positive face (the desire to be liked) and negative face (the desire for autonomy). Compliments are generally considered acts of positive politeness. It also considers how factors like gender influence politeness strategies in complimenting behavior. Lastly, Community of Practice (CoP) emphasizes that language and gender are constructed within social groups, highlighting the influence of sociocultural practices on linguistic behavior.

1.2. Research Objective

This study aims to critically investigate the language use of Meranaw speakers based on their compliment behavior. To be specific, this paper sought to identify and assess the different compliment and compliment response strategies employed by Meranaw College students and examine the varying differences of their compliment behavior across genders. Additionally, this paper seeks to explore the relevant social and cultural contexts in compliment behavior, including proximity and familiarity between Meranaw interlocutors.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study used quantitative research design to investigate the compliment and compliment response behavior of Meranaw college students. The use of frequency count and percentage determined the pattern of the linguistic phenomenon being investigated which provided more detailed analysis and interpretations on participants' responses.

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were 70 Meranaw university students, 35 males and 35 females, whose age ranged from 19 to 23 years old. Regardless of their year level, students were considered to participate in the study if they met the inclusion criteria. The selection of

participants is based on the following criteria: the student must (1) be a member of the Meranaw ethnic group, (2) practices Meranaw culture, and (3) proficient in the Meranaw language. Meranaws are cultural minority group of the Philippines that mostly resides in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte (Disoma 1999; Ulla, 2014 cited in Bantog & Sarip-Macarambon, 2021). They are also found in some places across the country such as in Cotabato, Bukidnon, Maguindanao, and as far as North Burneo (Nolasco, 2004). The researchers believed that the said number of sample participants was adequate to draw substantive data since it has a larger sample compared to the previous conducted by Berowa (2020) which deals with compliment behavior of Meranaw people with a total of forty-nine participants.

2.3. Research Setting

This study was conducted at the Mindanao State University (MSU) in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Philippines. The university is in the southernmost part of Mindanao and holds the largest population of students in the entire BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao) region, majority of which are Meranaws. MSU is known for its rich and diverse instream of sociocultural development and integrated learning. The university upholds several goals and principles in maintaining a dynamic learning environment. It consists of seventeen colleges on the main campus and has seven branches located in other areas in Mindanao. It was chosen by the researchers as the locale of this study due to its location and constituents as a potential abundant source of data about Meranaws.

2.4. Instrument of the Study

The instrument of this study is a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire which is predesigned to present situations in particular contexts and scenarios that aim to elicit the speech acts from the participants of this study. DCT questionnaire can easily produce large data that is useful in the initial understanding of a speech act in dialect or language (Beebe & Cummings 1996; Berowa, 2020, as cited in H. Abbas & Berowa,

2022). This study adapted the DCT questionnaire of Berowa (2020) where it has a total of ten (10) scenarios that will be divided into two parts. The first part consists of five (5) scenarios which require the participants to provide compliments in given situations. The second part consists of another five (5) scenarios supposed to compliment responses from the same participants. To capture the authenticity of Meranaw compliments, the participants were asked to answer the hypothetical scenarios with their native language (i.e., Meranaw).

2.5. Method of Analysis

In analyzing the collected data, the taxonomies or coding systems provided by Yuan (2002) and Holmes (1986, 1988, 1993) were used to categorize and analyze the compliments and compliment responses of Meranaw college students. The data collected was translated and tabulated using frequency

and percentage count to determine the compliment and compliment responses strategies of the participants. The data were then categorized based on the participants' gender to determine the differences in strategies between male and female participant. The answers from DCT were also coded by the choice of words and patterns. The highest frequency of speech pattern was regarded as the most common compliment strategies among Meranaws.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Compliment strategies employed by Meranaw College Students

The results show that Meranaw college students employ various compliment strategies as reflected on their compliment speech act. Shown in Table 1 is the overall percentage and frequency distribution of semantic formulas employed by the participants.

Table 1. Compliment strategies of Meranaw College Students

Semantic Formula	Overall Tokens					
	Male		Female		Overall	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
Compliments - Unbound						
Explicit Compliment	**126**	**39.87**	**155**	**43.05**	**281**	**41.56**
Implicit Compliment	16	5.06	5	1.38	21	3.10
Compliments - Bound						
Explanation	59	18.67	94	26.11	153	22.63
Information Question	5	1.58	10	2.77	15	2.21
Future Reference	10	3.16	1	0.27	11	1.62
Contrast	3	0.94	0	0	3	0.44
Advice	3	0.94	3	0.83	6	0.88
Request	2	0.63	4	1.11	6	0.88
Additional Semantic Formula						
Cultural and Religious Reference	40	12.65	44	12.22	84	12.42
Using Humor	19	6.01	15	4.16	34	5.02
Conversation Openers	4	1.26	3	0.83	7	1.03
Address Term	12	3.79	11	3.55	23	3.40
Non-Complimentary Replies						
Non-Compliment	10	3.16	10	2.77	20	2.95
Opt Out	7	2.21	5	1.38	12	1.77
TOTAL:	**316**	**46.74%**	**360**	**53.25%**	**676**	**100%**

Alqarni (2020) explained that unbound semantic formulas indicate expressions that can function as independent compliments. Meanwhile, bound semantic formulas refers to those complimentary expressions that cannot function alone without the help of the two unbound semantic formula – the explicit and implicit strategy. Explicit compliment is often a general statement with at least one positive semantic carrier unlike implicit strategy which does not necessarily require a presence of a positive semantic carrier but infers positive meaning from what is said in a particular context (Yuan, 2002). On the other hand, non-complimentary replies refer to expressions with neither positive semantic carrier nor positive meaning. This includes the non-compliments and the opt outs (Yuan, 2002).

As presented in Table 1, Meranaw participants have strong preference on using explicit compliment with the highest percentage of 41.56% of the overall frequency of raw tokens. This corroborates the findings of Zhang (2013) that explicit strategy is very common and popular among speakers of Philippine English. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with the result of the study of Berowa in 2020 that compliment speech act of Meranaw speakers utilize explicit strategy like any Filipino who value maintaining healthy interpersonal relationship with one another. The researchers believe that the participants' use of explicit strategy is closely tied to their *maratabat* as also inferred by Berowa (2020) in her study. *Maratabat* is defined as the deep sense of personal honor, dignity, self-esteem, and reputation of the Meranaw people (Cimene, Cabrillos & Santdander, 2018). Hence, it is natural for Meranaw speakers to opt for explicit strategies or direct compliments to save face and to avoid insulting other people as a means of conformity towards their cultural norms and beliefs.

Interestingly, the researchers discovered four additional semantic formulas evident on the compliment utterances of the participants. These formulas are *cultural and religious reference, using humor, conversation opener,* and *address term.* Unlike in the study

of Yuan (2002), these semantic formulas are evident on DCT data and not in natural data, suggesting that participants regularly use these strategies as they inherently opted for it even through writing. Findings revealed that most of the participants offer direct compliment along with other bound strategies. Most prominently used next to explanation is cultural and religious reference. This strategy is often observed on the use of linguistic items with direct relation to culture and religion.

The use of Arabic terms such as *Alhamdulillah* (All praise is due to Allah), *Tabarakallahul feekh* (May Allah bless you), *Ma Shaa Allah* (Allah wills it), and *In Shaa Allah* (if Allah wills) to politely express compliment is a strong indicator that proves religion as a social factor that affects the speech of the participants. In the study of Berowa (2020), she found out that most of Meranaw make use of the distinctive expression *Ma Shaa Allah* in their compliments, a strategy that is not found in any taxonomy of compliment speech act. Similarly, the presence of other culturally bound linguistic items such as *bangsa* (clan) and *kandori* (thanksgiving) prove that the compliment speech act of the Meranaw people is heavily influenced by their Community of Practice (CofP). Meranaws strongly adhere to their sociocultural and religious practices which naturally shape how they construct their speech.

Meanwhile, the use of humor, conversation openers, and address term are typically employed by the participants to initiate conversation with the subject of compliment and to maintain healthy interpersonal relationship and further strengthen their solidarity with them.

3.2. Compliment Response Strategies Employed by Meranaw College Students

The findings illustrate that Meranaw College students employ various compliment response strategies. Shown in Table 2 is the overall percentage and frequency distribution of semantic formulas employed by the participants.

Table 2. Compliment Response Strategies of Meranaw College Students

Compliment Response Strategies		Overall Tokens					
		Male		Female		Overall	
		f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
ACCEPT							
	Appreciation Tokens	**73**	**10.80**	**161**	**23.82**	**234**	**34.62**
	Agreeing Utterance	21	3.11	60	8.88	81	11.99
	Downgrading Utterance	54	7.99	21	3.11	75	11.10
	Return Compliment	0	0	0	0	0	0
REJECT							
	Disagreeing Utterance	2	0.29	4	0.59	6	0.89
	Question Accuracy	3	0.44	38	5.62	41	6.06
	Challenge Sincerity	3	0.44	17	2.25	20	2.96
EVADE							
	Shift Credit	60	8.88	22	3.25	82	12.13
	Informative Comment	9	1.33	32	4.73	41	6.06
	Request Reassurance	0	0	0	0	0	0
ADDITIONAL SEMANTIC FORMULA							
	Sarcasm	50	7.40	2	0.29	52	7.69
	Offering Utterance	41	6.06	3	0.44	44	6.50
	TOTAL:	**316**	**46.74%**	**360**	**53.25%**	**676**	**100%**

The researchers have observed that the use of *appreciation tokens* ("*Thank you!*", *"Thanks"*, etc.) is often followed by return compliments. The same pattern occurred in most of the responses under the acceptance strategy. This shows that Meranaw College students are likely to respond to compliments through simple and brief expressions of appreciation and frequently with return compliments as a courtesy. The most popularly used appreciation in Meranaw is *salamat* (thank you), as shown in the statements given, but it is never used alone in response. The researchers observe that Meranaws perceive return compliments as a necessary part of appreciative expressions to show politeness. This shows that Meranaws deem simple and brief appreciation tokens such as salamat (*thank you)* as uncommon because it implies to many as recognition of oneself as deserving of the compliment. Therefore, appreciation tokens are always accompanied by return compliments to shift credit to others and to express humility.

In this study, the order of the most preferred compliment response strategy, with *accept* as the most frequent followed by *evade* and the least favored, *reject* concur with the study of Zhang (2013) that suggested that

compliment and compliment response on Philippine English speakers are more likely to accept compliments than to reject it. A similar study was conducted by Berowa (2020) regarding the compliment and compliment response strategy among Meranaw EFL learners, which showed acceptance as the most frequently used compliment response among Meranaws. However, the sequence of the compliment response strategies presented in this study in terms of the most to least preferred strategy differs from Berowa (2020) and Zhang (2013). Both studies suggested that *reject* is the second most preferred compliment response of the Meranaws while this study disconfirms it with *evade* as the second most preferred strategy in the data.

Findings revealed that *evade* strategy, as the second most preferred compliment response by Meranaw college students, has a significant implication in this study. This pattern suggests that Meranaws have a bulk of strategies in evading compliments, not to show impoliteness towards others, but rather, it is their way of being courteous toward them. This means that politeness among Meranaws is not only evading compliments but also directing compliments toward someone else, or most

often to God. The expressions of Meranaws are usually equipped with words and terms relevant to God and other people involved around them, such as family and cousins. The number of such responses emphasizes the collective identity of the Meranaws apparent in their language use.

In the analysis of the data, the researchers have found several compliment response strategies that do not fall under Holmes' categories. These tokens were identified as *sarcasm* and *offering utterances* under additional semantic formula, as shown in Table 2. Sarcasm and rhetorical questions were used by respondents to express humor or to downgrade themselves. The *offering utterances*

are compliments responses that show sincere, and objective offers from the receiver of compliments.

The offering utterances show the polite practices of Meranaws in the casual conversations among them. In most cases, offering an item or something to someone who gave the compliment is a common response to show courtesy, as observed in the data. The distance and proximity between the interlocutors affect the use of offering utterances by the informants. They used *offering utterances* when sincere in their offers as shown in the following:

English	Meranaw
Can I buy you one?	Ba kawn pamasa?
Do you like it?	Banga pekababayai?
I have another one at home.	Aden a ped aken a bag sa walay.
I will give this to you.	Ibegay aken reka aya.

Offers that were categorized in *sarcasm* were insincere expressions that were used to evade compliments.

3.3 Compliment and compliment response strategies across genders

The research found that compliment strategies employed by Meranaw male and female participants do not differ since both equally prefer using explicit strategy followed by explanation and cultural and religious reference. However, the researchers discovered that both groups of participants differ in terms of their compliment response strategies. Female participants have apparent similarities in the strategies they employ. Their responses are mostly combinations of multiple semantic formulas such as the use of appreciation tokens preceding return compliments and downgrading utterances in compliment responses. The researchers observed that the responses from females tend to be polite and specific. They are likely to compliment the person who offered a compliment after showing appreciation through agreeing utterances, and appreciation tokens, but are less likely to use downgrading utterances. In the study of Lakoff (1975), distinctions between men and women

were made by suggesting that women's speech tend to be polite because it shows indirectness, mitigation, and hesitation which are characterized by hedge, tentativeness, and tag questions

This study also found that Meranaw women tend to give more compliments considering the number of tokens drawn from the compliments of female participants which is consistent with the findings of Herbert (1990) and Mojica (2002). The researchers believe that the sociocultural and religious practices of the participants prominent in their community is a huge factor that influence the manner of speech of Meranaw women. In Meranaw community, women are expected to be obedient, modest, and well-kept who upholds the teachings of Islam (Pimping, 2018). Thus, it is not strange that women's linguistic behavior is polite by utilizing strategies that will allow them to build strong interpersonal relationships with their fellow Meranaws and to also protect their honor or *maratabat*.

On the other hand, it was shown that Meranaw male participants is empathetic and equally polite to women's speech despite their strong preference of direct compliments. This is evident on the low frequency count of *non-complimentary replies* and their inclination to

use strategies that allows them to deeply socialize and connect with other people (e.g. explanation, cultural and religious reference, using humor, and address term). According to Nolasco (2004), traditional Meranaw men are expected to be responsible and imbibe certain traits such as *malai-takdir* (concerned and committed), *malai-sekdel* (deeply concerned), and *mawaraw* (brave). The same set of expectations demanded by their religion. Hence, it is natural that their linguistic behavior is not only direct but also polite and empathetic. This is well depicted in the male participants' response strategies which constitute most of the *agreeing utterances* and are attributed with direct expressions of gratitude. This finding is consistent with Montgomery (1998) that male speakers use polite language especially when they are speaking to women (Keikhaie & Mozaffari, 2013) since most of the situations in the provided hypothetical scenarios in the DCT has woman as its subject of compliment.

In relation to the use of religious references ("*Mashaa Allah!", "Tabarak Allah", "Allahumma barik"*, etc.), Meranaw female college students prefer to use them more frequently than males do as appreciation tokens. Male informants employ Meranaw expressions based on cultural and religious references to evade compliments offered to them, such as *"so bantogen na sii ko Allah"* which means *All praises to Allah*.

The compliment response strategies used between male and female informants differ based on how they perceived compliments and the features that characterize the choice of words and how expressions were formulated. The study of Holmes (1988) also defined the differences based on the perception of male and female informants to compliments in that females generally use compliments to each other more often than men do to each other. The findings of this study also suggest that the Meranaw female college students to have presented more details in providing polite expressions through appreciation tokens, shift credit, informative comments, return compliments, and downgrading utterances. The male college students on the other hand are attributed with agreeing utterances, sarcasm, and offering utterances.

4. Conclusion

This study illustrates the compliment and compliment response strategies employed by Meranaw college students at Mindanao State University – Main Campus. The result of this study reveals that Meranaw compliments and compliments responses are extensive in linguistic form. They tend to be specific, explicit, and definite in terms of the choice of words and the formulation of words and sentences. This reveals how Meranaws employ a variety of semantic patterns to express and get their meaning across to people. The compliment strategies they employ tend to be explicit and direct. Meranaws tend to use definitive words, phrases, and sentences to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings among them as reflected in the result of this study. Their expressions are substantive to people and things involved such as indirect reference to family members and relatives to elicit response from others.

However, in the case of compliment response strategies, the participants used vague expressions to express their thoughts and to imply meanings. It implies that evading compliments is part of Meranaw practice in that it is not perceived as impolite or discourteous but a means of being considerate of others during a conversation as evident in the most prevalent pattern of compliments and compliment responses in the data. It suggests that one way of being polite in Meranaw culture is directing compliments towards other people or most often to God. The expressions of Meranaws are usually equipped with words and terms relevant to God and other people involved around them such as family and cousins. The number of such responses emphasizes the collective identity of the Meranaws apparent in their language use.

Furthermore, the result of this implies that Meranaws employ various strategies not only to strengthen the social ties among the interlocutors but also to uphold their cultural values and protect their *maratabat* or honor. This is observed on how Meranaw men and women socially construct their speech in accordance with the norms prevalent in their community to save face. This only suggests that Meranaw people appear to acknowledge the universal notion of face in human society which is the need to protect and to maintain the face of

interlocutors in any form of linguistic interactions. This study demonstrates the importance of understanding and acknowledging the socio-pragmatic variables present in intercultural communication to establish a more harmonious relationship among the interlocutors. Moreover, this study may serve as reference in the implementation of pedagogical approaches in the Philippines to foster and elevate the socio-pragmatic competence and improve the intercultural skills of learners. It is recommended for future researchers to extend the findings of this study by exploring other relevant variables such as socioeconomic status, education level, and age to deepen understandings of the intracultural variation in Meranaw speech acts.

5. Recommendations

Considering the findings of this study, researchers and linguists are encouraged to conduct further investigations into the newly identified semantic formulas in the compliment behavior of Meranaw speakers, which include cultural and religious references, humor, and offering utterances. These patterns offer valuable insights that can broaden existing frameworks in pragmatics and enrich the understanding of speech act theory, particularly within indigenous Philippine languages. Moreover, the study revealed gendered differences in compliment response strategies, which are shaped by sociocultural norms and religion. The findings suggest the need for further research into other influential variables such as socioeconomic status, education level, age, and other social factors. Exploring compliments and compliment response strategies can provide a deeper and more comprehensive view of intra-cultural variation and pragmatic behavior in high-context communities. In sum, the study highlights the intricate link between language use, cultural values, and traditional practices, reinforcing the importance of localized linguistic research in advancing studies on discourse and sociolinguistic frameworks in Philippine context.

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Students' Computer Value Belief and Perceived Parental Support among VSU-Isabel Students during COVID-19 Online Classes

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Abstract

The sudden shift to online learning brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for tertiary students, particularly in developing regions like the Philippines. This study sought to examine how students' computer value beliefs (CVB)—their perceived importance of computer use in education—are associated with their perceived parental support (PPS) during online classes. Specifically, it addressed the problem of limited understanding of how parental support influences students' valuation of technology for learning amid crisis-driven educational changes. Using a correlational research design, data were collected from 687 college students at VSU-Isabel through a structured online questionnaire featuring validated Likert-scale items on CVB and PPS. While convenience sampling was necessary due to health restrictions, it also limits the generalizability of findings. Descriptive results indicated that students generally recognized the value of computers in their education, although their perceptions of parental support varied. A statistically significant moderate positive correlation was found between CVB and PPS ($r = .506$, $p < .01$), indicating that stronger parental support is associated with a higher student appreciation of technology in learning. The study's findings highlight the need for institutional efforts to foster parental involvement—such as virtual orientation sessions or support networks—which may enhance student motivation, engagement, and overall academic success in increasingly digital learning environments.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered the educational landscape in the Philippines. In an effort to mitigate health risks while continuing instruction, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) encouraged institutions to shift to flexible and online learning modalities. This abrupt transition, known as the "new normal," challenged both students and educators, especially in rural and semi-urban areas like Isabel, Leyte. Visayas State University (VSU) – Isabel, a satellite campus of one of the country's leading state universities, serves a diverse student population, many of whom come from low- to middle-income households. The campus is situated in a coastal municipality where access to high-speed internet and digital learning tools is limited for many students. These contextual realities shaped how students adapted to online education and highlighted the critical role of parental involvement in supporting this transition.

Several factors influence students' learning experiences in this environment, including the motivational influence of their families. Parental support, whether emotional, financial, or logistical, can serve as a buffer against the stress and challenges brought by remote learning. In this context,

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one of the notable factors influencing students' educational experiences is their perceived parental support, which plays a pivotal role in shaping their computer value beliefs (CVB). CVB refers to students' beliefs about the usefulness and importance of computers in their education, which are essentitheal for thriving in an ICT-integrated learning environment.

Students are increasingly integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into their educational journeys, signaling a shift to a technology-based approach that leverages advanced learning tools [1]. The integration of ICT has proven to be a valuable asset, with computers becoming indispensable tools in modern education [2]. These technologies have not only enhanced the efficiency of learning but also enabled students to participate in dynamic, interactive, and self-directed educational experiences. Moreover, schools with robust ICT infrastructure often benefit from stronger parental and community support, reinforcing the importance of technological resources and collaborative educational environments [3].

The importance of parental support is further emphasized in the work of Boudreault-Bouchard et al. [4], who explored students' perspectives on parental assistance. Their research confirmed that such support is closely tied to positive mental health outcomes and increased self-confidence. Similarly, Sabatelli and Anderson [5] highlighted the emotional bond between parents and children as essential to healthy development and academic success. However, the absence of parental involvement can often stem from communication gaps or a lack of shared understanding about educational priorities in the digital age.

Given these theoretical and contextual insights, the present study explores the varying perspectives of students at VSU–Isabel regarding their Computer Value Beliefs (CVB) and Perceived Parental Support (PPS). Specifically, it investigates whether a significant relationship exists between these two variables in the context of a post-disaster, resource-limited setting in the Philippines.

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to a growing body of literature on ICT in education by focusing on a specific, underrepresented population—students in a rural public university during a national health crisis. Second, it uniquely explores the interaction between parental support and computer-related attitudes, an area seldom studied in the Philippine setting. Third, the findings can inform school administrators, policymakers, and families about the vital role parents play in students' digital learning experiences. Unlike previous studies conducted in more affluent or Western contexts, this study foregrounds the challenges and adaptations within a Philippine state university community, offering context-specific insights that can shape more inclusive and equitable educational strategies in the post-pandemic era.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

This study utilized convenience sampling to select participants, specifically targeting college students enrolled at VSU–Isabel from first-year to fifth-year levels. A total of 687 students actively responded to an online survey administered via Google Forms. To encourage participation, the survey link was disseminated through various communication channels, including messenger platforms, email, and

text messages. The questionnaire was accessible during the first two weeks of February 2021, and data collection concluded in the third week of the same month.

While convenience sampling facilitated quick and accessible data gathering amid the COVID-19 restrictions, it inherently carries the risk of selection bias, as it may not accurately represent the broader student population. Students with stable internet access or stronger engagement with digital platforms were more likely to participate, potentially excluding those from underserved or less-connected areas.

Table 1. *Respondents' Demographic Profile, n=687*

Demographic Profile	Frequency	%
Sex		
Male	220	32
Female	467	68
Age		
20 & below	302	44
21 to 30	364	53
31 and above	21	3
Year Level		
First year	181	26.3
Second year	179	2.1
Third year	174	25.3
Fourth year	99	14.4
Fifth year	54	7.4
Course		
Bachelor of Elem. Educ	128	18.63
Bachelor of PE	116	16.88
BS Agribusiness	115	16.74
BSED major ENGLISH	58	8.44
BSED major MAPEH	18	2.62
BSED major MATH	46	6.69
BSED major SCIENCE	32	4.65
BS Industrial Eng'g	57	8.29
BS Industrial Tech	39	5.67
BS Mechanical Eng'g	78	11.35

Table 1 presents a view of the demographic profile of the respondents, comprising first- to fifth-year college students from Visayas State University - Isabel during the 2020 - 2021 academic year. The sample was predominantly female, representing 68% of the respondents. Additionally, 53% of the participants were aged between 21 and 30 years.

The distribution of participants in this study across academic programs is as follows: Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) comprised 18.63% of the sample, followed by Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) at 16.88%, and BS in Agribusiness at 16.74%. Meanwhile, BSED majoring in English accounted for 8.44%, Bachelor of Industrial Engineering (BSIE) for 8.29%, and Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering (BSME) for 11.35%. Additionally, Bachelor of Information Technology (BSIT) made up 5.67% of the sample, BSED majoring in Mathematics comprised 6.69%, BSED Majoring in Science accounted for 4.65%, and BSED major MAPEH constituted 2.62%.

2.2. Research Instruments

The study employed a structured questionnaire as its primary data collection tool, comprising three distinct sections: (1) Demographics, (2) Computer Value Beliefs (CVB), and (3) Perceived Parental Support (PPS). The demographic portion gathered essential respondent information such as name (optional), gender, age, student ID number, academic year, and program enrolled. The survey was administered online via Google Forms to ensure accessibility and reach during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main instrument used was the Survey of Motivational Belief and Social Support (MBSS), which consisted of 17 items covering four domains: Perceived Peer Support, Computer Self-Efficacy Belief, Computer Value Belief, and Perceived Parental Support. This study specifically utilized the CVB and PPS subscales, each comprising five items, rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

To establish content validity, the adapted questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in educational technology and psychology, who assessed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. Their suggestions were incorporated to ensure the instrument's appropriateness for the local context.

To determine reliability, a pilot test was conducted with 30 college students from VSU–Isabel who were not part of the main sample. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to evaluate internal consistency, resulting in a score of 0.88 for the CVB scale and 0.85 for the PPS scale, indicating high reliability.

The use of structured instruments like the MBSS aligns with validated approaches in educational research. For instance, Vekiri and Chronaki [6] examined gender differences in technology-related beliefs and behaviors, including perceived social support, computer confidence, and value beliefs. Their work reinforces the importance of using theoretically grounded tools when investigating technology integration and student perceptions in educational contexts.

2.3. Data Analysis

The research adopted a quantitative design to examine the association between Computer Value Beliefs (CVB) and Perceived Parental Support (PPS). The study utilized SPSS software for data analysis, which calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between CVB and PPS. Additionally, mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the central tendency and variability of the responses, providing a comprehensive overview of the data.

Furthermore, regression analysis was also employed in this study to investigate whether CVB could predict PPS. This method allowed for a

more detailed exploration of the relationship, beyond just the correlation, by quantifying the extent to which CVB explains the variance in PPS [7]. The results of the regression analysis highlighted the significant predictive role of CVB in shaping perceptions of parental support, thus offering deeper insights into the dynamics between these two variables.

2.4. Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that may have influenced the results. Firstly, the sample size, though substantial, was limited to a specific group of students, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Secondly, the timing of data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic could have shaped students' perceptions, as family routines, learning modalities, and parent-child communication were significantly altered. The shift to online learning may have either increased or reduced parental involvement, depending on household dynamics. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported responses, which may be subject to personal bias or misinterpretation. The exclusive focus on the relationship between Computer Value Beliefs (CVB) and Perceived Parental Support (PPS) also omits other possible influencing factors, such as socioeconomic status, parents' digital literacy, or academic pressures. Future studies are encouraged to use more diverse samples and explore additional variables to enrich understanding of this relationship.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 2. *Degree of Belief in the Value of Computers*

Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1. Having computer skills is beneficial to me.	687	4.02	0.72	Agree
2. I enjoy using computers, but at times, I find it challenging to stop.	687	3.35	0.87	Undecided
3. Being proficient in computer use matters to me.	687	3.94	0.73	Agree
4. Enhancing my computer skills is a priority for me.	687	4.13	0.72	Agree
5. Future professionals will largely depend on computer expertise.	687	4.13	0.72	Agree
OVERALL	**687**	**3.91**	**0.33**	**Agree**

Scale Interpretation: 4.3–5.0 (Strongly Agree), 3.5–4.2 (Agree), 2.7–3.4 (Neutral/Undecided), 1.9–2.6 (Disagree), 1.0–1.8 (Strongly Disagree).

Table 2 presents the outcomes of a survey administered to students, focusing on their computer value beliefs. The data illustrates an overall mean score of 3.91,

indicating a consensus among students regarding the importance of computers. Notably, statements 4 and 5, which revolve around the significance of enhancing computer skills and the future demand for computer proficiency in professional settings, obtained the highest mean scores of 4.13, reflecting agreement among the respondents. In contrast, statement 2, which assesses the extent of enjoyment experienced during computer-related activities, received the lowest mean score of 3.35, suggesting a degree of uncertainty among students. The findings revealed that the students of VSU-Isabel agreed with the value of computers. These are related to previous studies that explored students' attitudes and beliefs regarding computers, confirming that students tend to recognize the value and importance of computer technology in various educational contexts [8. 9, 10].

Table 3. *The Degree of Perceived Parental Support*

Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1. My parents support my use of computers.	687	3.25	0.89	Undecided
2. They believe that computer proficiency will benefit my future.	687	3.55	0.93	Agree
3. They have confidence in my ability to excel in computer use.	687	3.51	0.87	Agree
4. They are pleased with my progress in using computers.	687	3.46	0.832	Undecided
5. They actively engage when I work on the computer.	687	3.07	0.96	Undecided
OVERALL	**687**	**3.37**	**0.20**	**Undecided**

Scale Interpretation: 4.3–5.0 (Strongly Agree), 3.5–4.2 (Agree), 2.7–3.4 (Neutral/Undecided), 1.9–2.6 (Disagree), 1.0–1.8 (Strongly Disagree).

Table 3 presents the findings of a survey measuring student respondents' perceptions of parental support. The overall mean score of 3.37 reflects a generally neutral or ambivalent stance among students toward the level of support they perceive from their parents. Among the five survey items, the statement *"My parents think that I can do well at computers"* received the highest mean of 3.51, indicating moderate affirmation that parents believe in their children's abilities. In contrast, the statement *"My parents get involved when I use the computer"* yielded the lowest mean of 3.07, pointing to some level of uncertainty or lack of perceived parental involvement in actual computer use.

This uncertainty may stem from several influencing factors, such as cultural

norms that shape how support is expressed within families. In some cultures, parental involvement is more indirect, such as providing resources or general encouragement, rather than active participation in a child's computer activities. As a result, students may not interpret these forms of support as involvement, leading to ambivalent responses. Additionally, communication gaps between parents and children—particularly regarding expectations, rules, or the value placed on technology use—can contribute to misinterpretations or underestimation of support.

Moreover, generational digital divides may further complicate perceptions. Parents who are less technologically adept may avoid engaging in computer-related activities, not due to disinterest, but due to unfamiliarity or lack of confidence. This reinforces the need to consider not only the quantity of parental involvement, but also the form and clarity of that involvement. These nuances align with prior research emphasizing the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of parental support for technology use [11, 12, 13]. Therefore, while the data points to a generally moderate perception of parental support, deeper exploration is warranted to understand how cultural expectations and communication dynamics shape students' interpretations of that support.

Table 4. *Correlation Between Computer Value Belief and Perceived Parental Support (n = 687)*

	Computer Value Belief	Perceived Parental Support
Computer Value Belief		
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.506*
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	687	687
Perceived Parental Support		
Pearson Correlation	.506*	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	—
N	687	687

Note. N = 687. **p** < .01 (two-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 above provides an overview of the correlation analysis conducted between the degree of computer value belief and perceived parental support among students at VSU-Isabel. The researcher used a significance level (alpha) of 0.01 and a degree of freedom of 685 to calculate the statistical significance of this link. A critical value from the r-table, precisely 0.079, was referenced. According to established statistical conventions, the null hypothesis will be rejected if Pearson's r surpasses the critical value obtained from the r-table. Conversely, retaining the null hypothesis is appropriate if Pearson's r falls below the r-tabled value.

The analysis of the collected data unveiled a moderately positive correlation, with Pearson's r calculated at 0.506 and p < 0.00001, indicating a statistically significant relationship. Furthermore, this correlation is considered moderately strong. Thus, the findings suggest a meaningful and moderately robust association exists between the degree of computer value belief and perceived

parental support among the student population at VSU-Isabel. These findings align with previous research, emphasizing the interconnectedness of computer value beliefs and perceived parental support in influencing students' attitudes and behaviors [10, 12].

Table 5. *Regression Analysis*

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	R²
Constant	1.52	-	13.45	.000	
Computer Value Belief (CVB)	0.45	0.506	12.85	.000	0.256

Table 5 reveals that 25.6% of the variance in Perceived Parental Support (PPS) can be explained by Computer Value Beliefs (CVB), as indicated by an R^2 value of 0.256. This suggests that students' beliefs about the value of computers play a significant role in shaping how they perceive their parents' support. The statistical significance of this relationship is confirmed by the p-value of 0.000, indicating that the association between Computer Value Beliefs and Perceived Parental Support is highly significant at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.45 implies that for each 1-unit increase in Computer Value Beliefs, the Perceived Parental Support increases by 0.45 units. The standardized coefficient (β) of 0.506 further highlights a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that higher Computer Value Beliefs correlate with stronger perceptions of parental support regarding computer use.

These results suggest that students who place a higher value on computer proficiency tend to report greater support from their parents in terms of their use of computers. However, since 25.6% of the variance is explained by Computer Value Beliefs, it is clear that other factors not considered in this analysis may also contribute to the perception of parental support. Given the statistical significance of the findings, it can be concluded that there is a meaningful association between students' Computer Value Beliefs and their Perceived Parental Support. Future research may benefit from exploring additional variables, such as social influences or academic performance, to further enrich the understanding of this relationship.

4. Conclusions

This study provides critical insights into students' perceptions of computer value beliefs (CVB) and perceived parental support (PPS), offering timely contributions to education both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid the shift to technology-driven learning, the findings reveal that students from VSU-Isabel demonstrate an ambivalent stance toward parental support, with a mean score of 3.37. This ambivalence may stem from communication gaps, generational differences in technology use, or pandemic-induced stressors that disrupted traditional parental engagement. Conversely, students reported a high appreciation for the value of

computers, reinforcing their readiness to embrace digital learning tools and echoing earlier studies [12, 14].

A statistically significant moderate correlation (r = 0.506, p < 0.01) between CVB and PPS highlights the influential role of parental support in shaping students' attitudes toward technology. This correlation underscores the importance of fostering home-school collaboration in digital literacy development.

To enhance real-world applicability, it is recommended that educational institutions organize parent-oriented webinars, open forums, or hands-on technology orientations to bridge the gap between home support and digital learning demands. Parents should be encouraged to take an active role in their children's technology use by offering guidance, creating open lines of communication, and participating in school-initiated tech activities. Simultaneously, schools should integrate practical computer tasks—such as word processing, spreadsheet creation, and internet-based research—into the curriculum to ensure students gain relevant digital skills.

This research contributes to the broader understanding of student-technology dynamics in the post-pandemic era, emphasizing the need for inclusive, family-based strategies in technology education. However, limitations such as the geographically confined sample (VSU-Isabel students) and the timing of data collection during COVID-19 may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should consider a more diverse respondent base and longitudinal approaches to assess how PPS and CVB evolve over time.

Finally, this study reinforces the need to strengthen parental involvement and institutional support to cultivate positive student engagement with technology—an essential component of 21st-century learning.

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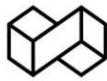
Framing the Bangsamoro Construct of Participatory Governance: The Youth in its Governance Framework

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Abstract

Bangsamoro moral governance is a novel concept and there are no studies yet situating the youth in its governance framework. This research is an initial attempt to analyze where participatory mechanisms have been enshrined in law to ensure meaningful participation by the youth in governance. To establish this, the researcher reviewed one-hundred and twenty-two (122) resolutions passed by the BTA-Parliament within a given period and juxtaposed them with the foundational principles enshrined in the Philippine Constitution. Data analysis is primarily textual, guided by social constructivism and governance theory as frameworks of analysis. An inductive-qualitative method was used as part of discursive deconstruction, which supports the objective of an interpretive (textual) analysis of each resolution considered in the conduct of research by allowing the researcher to establish the construction of meaning in light of Bangsamoro culture, context, and time. Key findings reveal that first, the Bangsamoro construct of participatory governance is inflexibly framed from four identified sources, which entails a very restrictive leeway to encourage participation. Second, the foundational principles of moral governance must be reexamined, as they are indicative of how moral governance is to be achieved. A reexamination may entail a re-interpretation to a more progressive stance on youth participation, especially in crafting legislations. Third, the Bangsamoro youth fit the governance framework by being encouraged to able to freely participate in the political process, with an assured seat for sectoral representation. However, this poses a challenge on the quality of representation of the youth sector as matter of policy.

1. Introduction

The passage of Republic Act (RA) 11054 on July 24, 2018 provided for the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) supplanting the previously existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Bangsamoro governance (*moral* governance, framed from Islamic holy sources) is the Bangsamoro's overarching policy guideline in the implementation of all proposed infrastructure programs, activities, projects, and services (PAPs). It serves as a paradigm and a mindset of all Bangsamoro government stakeholders, free from all forms of corruption and improved service delivery (Bangsamoro Development Plan, henceforth, the BDP) anchored on the following: (1) cognizance of God, (2) moral and ethical values, (3) vicegerency and upholding trust, and (4) striving for excellence. However, although among its dozen pillars of moral governance are consultation and inclusivity, the BDP is vague on *where* and *how* its citizens may participate within the processes of governance in the region.

Citizen participation, particularly the youth, in governance structures is essential as they are active political actors in peace and conflict (Huesca, Jr., 2019) especially in Mindanao. We recognize the fact that the youth

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(specifically, youth organizations) contribute to peacebuilding at the grassroots level (Berowa, 2024), as they are also active recipients of peace and civic education in the BARMM (Berowa, 2024). The youth have also been active agents in supporting the causes of the MILF long before the establishment of the BARMM, due to two factors: first is proximity to the MILF camps and ancillary communities, and second, kinship ties (Podder, 2012). Being active agents, the youth are being molded to take a lead role in the future of Bangsamoro whereby their participation in governance is not just essential but, even more so, critical to the process of governance. However, this is not made explicit anywhere even in the Bangsamoro Local Governance Code of 2020. Instead, the Bangsamoro Parliament had passed Autonomy Act Number 10, establishing the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) on February 28, 2020, in recognition of the "vital role" of the youth in nation-building. Nevertheless, governance has been identified as one of the priority agenda as the center for youth participation and development in the Bangsamoro region (Bangsamoro Youth Transition Priority Agenda, 2020), inclusive of health, education, peace-building and security, and active citizenship.

With the challenging social construct of *moral* governance, and the inexplicit dimension of citizen (specifically, the youth) participation in its development plan and its code of governance, the present paper deems to answer three pressing concerns: First is on how the Bangsamoro government framed and constructed participatory governance in light of its capacity to achieve specific goals; second, is on how and where do the Bangsamoro youth fit within its own governance framework; and third, to identify the windows of opportunity that are deemed open for youth engagement in the Bangsamoro construct of participatory governance.

2. Methodology

This research endeavor is both qualitative and descriptive; it is qualitative in the sense that it attempts to engage in an in-depth analysis of government documents and research data from published research materials using the discursive method. Also, it is descriptive because it selects from a finite number of materials using systematic inference

with the aim of describing the concept of moral governance.

The research considers the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) as its research setting. This research was done at the height of the pandemic in the last quarter of 2020 where strict travel restrictions were imposed, thus data sources were drawn from the website of the Bangsamoro Parliament, specific to the intent of establishing how the youth are empowered through participatory governance as framed by (and within) the Bangsamoro governance framework. The instruments of research are archived sources and government documents. The method is as follows: First, published documents and sources on governance are initially selected when they mention two keywords: Bangsamoro and Governance. Then the materials are broken down into a classification of three: definition, concern (focus), and method of participation. The classified documents are then cross-tabulated to answer the question *how* – specifying varied forms participation. These are then analyzed in the context of the framework of social constructivism and governance theory, whose relevant concepts are discussed in the section that follows. Purposively, the researcher acquired and examined copies of all the 122 resolutions passed by the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (BTA) until the inception of the Bangsamoro Parliament from March 19, 2019 until March 25, 2021, and closely examined each document using the process previously mentioned for reference to youth participation in Bangsamoro governance. The process is done manually, without the assistance of electronic or artificial intelligence applications. These documents are made available for purposes of transparency at https://parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph/resoluti ons/.

The method of data analysis is primarily textual as guided by social constructivism and governance theory as its frameworks of analysis. An inductive-qualitative method was used to critically analyze the texts as part of discursive deconstruction.

Frameworks of analysis
In political science theory, constructivism is an approach to discipline with

an anti-foundationalist ontological position having an interpretivist epistemology; this in turn, privileges a qualitative methodology. Let us simplify these, seemingly, technical jargon of the discipline. An anti-foundationalist ontological position means that no objective truth exists independently of the knowledge of the observer/actor since reality is a mere social construction. The superstructure of known truths is bounded by the social world by which the actor derives meaning, hence, his or her ideas are tainted, influenced and shaped by that which he or she draws meaning from. An interpretivist epistemological position simply entails that what can be known from that which exists can be derived from the world as interpreted by actors themselves – a hermeneutic level – or that an actor's interpretation can be interpreted by another (an observer) – as a double hermeneutic. In addition, though the relationship of ontology and epistemology are "contested" (Furlong & Marsh, 2010), the authors assert that the relationship of these two results to a path-dependence in terms of its research methodology – in the case of constructivism, qualitative methods are privileged, as is the case in this research.

Constructivism as an approach to political science, considers politics as driven by the denotations that actors ascribe to their actions and their respective individual context (Marsh and Stoker, 2010). Seminal work on constructivism has defined actors as referring to individuals and/or collectivities (Kratochwil, 1989), whose actions are governed by certain rules and norms. Accordingly, these actions are made meaningful only within an "intersubjectively understood context." In addition, as deduced from this great text is the fact that actions are always driven by motives, and motives come because of the aptitude to think. This capacity to reason is, accordingly, the standard criterion for cognitive competence (Onuf, 1989). However, this competence develops only over time as individuals deal with a socially constructed reality, and that reality is not just an assemblage of rules, but rather, of multifarious practices. Acting within the boundary set by rules, the actor's interactions would constitute a social structure where these actors engage in meaningful action made in consideration of the demeanor of others. These ideas derived from canonical

texts of constructivism shall inform and figure in our analysis in the present endeavor.

However, an approach is only constructivist to the extent that it argues that subjective construction of meaning of some sort affects what people do (Parsons, 2010). What is distinctive about constructivism is its being enthralled with the role of interpretation (the constant construction and reconstruction of meaning) in human action, the supposed intersubjective understanding of context - shared meanings - as initially propounded by Kratochwil (1989). Thus, the meanings we attach to certain actions creates the context by which further actions and interactions are defined and further limited through the institutionalization of structures of meaning and interpretations.

For constructivists, ideas, norms, or identities do have "constitutive power". The process of social construction, otherwise also known as meaning-making, through which people arrive at their conceptions, norms or identities are subjective to context, cognition and shared understanding of meaning. Hence, the adoption of certain social constructs comes prior to an arrival at a course of action (Parsons, 2010). However, we must be reminded that Constructivism is not a standalone theory in the discipline of political science, but rather, a broad umbrella of theoretical arguments built upon the idea that people only arrive at certain actions and decisions due to their adoption of certain meanings, their respective 'social construct' to interpret or construe the world.

The key concepts of Constructivism are social construction, intersubjectivity, and identity (Hay, 2002). In addition, the striking theoretical stance of constructivism are the following: (1) it allows for the exploration of the conditions of existence of both constants and volatilities in political behavior that are held to be context-dependent; (2) asserts that rationality is dependent on three factors: culture, context, and time; and (3) ideas (in the form of knowledge, norms, and convictions) influence political behavior. Moreover, constructivism's key assumptions are the following: (1) our thought processes play a critical role in the construction of meaning, and hence, our reality, (2) The social and the political are both constitutive intersubjective domains – a product of our social construction, (3) There is no objective social or political

reality that exists independently of our knowledge or understanding of it – hence, all social realms are human constructions, (4) ideational factors are material factors in international relations, and (5) for most constructivists, positivism cannot be in harmony with an interpretivist-intersubjective understanding of reality.

Another framework used by this paper is governance theory. Here, we adopt this definition of Governance: "It is about the rules of collective decision-making in settings where there are a plurality of actors or organizations and where no formal control system can dictate the terms of the relationship between these actors and organizations (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009)." Accordingly, the following are vital elements of this definition:

The first element is *rules*. The rules entrenched within a system of governance can stretch from the methodical to the informal. In studying governance, we are interested in both the methodical structures of decision-making that have been institutionalized, along with the more informal practices, conventions and customs. The authors refer to this as the 'rules-in-use', any specific combination of methodical and the non-methodical institutions that have a bearing on the way that a group of people settle what to decide, how to decide, and who shall decide. The second element is *the collective*. Collective decisions are judgments made by collectivity. Collective decisions include concerns of mutual influence and control. Hence in governance arrangements some would dominate the agenda, while others are assigned the burden, an obligation, to accept collective decisions. The third element is *decision-making*. Decision-making can be episodic or periodic, but it may also just be constant, as in the case of organizations and networks of organizations. Collective decisions demand established rules about which personalities can decide what, as well as how these decision-makers can be made accountable. And finally, the fourth element is *authority and coercion*. In governance, no formal control system' can determine relationships, inclusive of outcomes. Hence, in multi-stakeholder participatory governance, authority and coercion are resources made available to some, under certain arrangements, but never in sufficient quantity or quality to enable them to dominate and unilaterally subjugate others in the process of decision-making. Politicians may have the advantage of authority, but this can be counterpoised by surgical coercive tactics by coalitions and networks of disadvantaged groups.

3.Results and Discussions
3.1 Framing Participatory Governance

The definitions of governance mentioned in the extant literature are focused on the *concern* of governance - that of genuine inclusion in decision-making (Bingham, Nabatchi & O'Leary, 2005; Singh, Ansari & Singh, 2009; Chhotray & Stoker, 2009) - which differs from that of the Bangsamoro construct. Instead of looking at the concern of governance – how decisions are arrived at – the Bangsamoro construct of governance was framed from the *source* of governing, and rather focused on *how* to make exclusive decisions. The Bangsamoro construct of governance can only be derived from the Holy *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* (the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), *Qiyas* (analogous reasoning) and *Ijma* (consensus); this is so because Islamic governance, as a political rule, can only be derived from such sources (Bouzenita, 2012). Moral governance per se is a model of governance that balances the sociopolitical aspect of government activities and the ethical side (Bangsamoro Development Plan, 2020), guided by the principles of cognizance of God, moral and ethical values, vicegerency and upholding trust, and striving for excellence.

The Bangsamoro Chief Minister, Murad Ebrahim Al Haj, considers good governance to stem from a "morally upright" bureaucracy, with an end to building a strong foundation for a better Bangsamoro, by calling it with another name – *moral* governance. Moral governance refers to the set of rules, practices and processes completely devoid of all evils of graft and corruption, and explicitly driven by moral principles of utmost dedication, devotion, honesty, justice and integrity (Mindanao People's Caucus, 2020). In short, Bangsamoro governance is moral because it is framed from holy sources, but at the same time anchored on the rule of law, the promotion of good governance, and democratic values enshrined in the Philippine Constitution.

Moral Governance and its foundational principles

In order to closely examine the principles where *moral* governance is anchored on, they have to be juxtaposed with the provisions of the law or the resolutions passed by the BTA-Parliament, as these are deemed to be indicative of its intent. The first principle is that of rule of law. As a constitutional principle, the rule of law, as defined by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) under the Philippine Development Plan of 2011-2016, indicates that the "government adheres to the impersonal and impartial application of stable predictable laws, statutes, rules and regulations, without regard for social status or political considerations." It is the application of law constructed to apply to all regardless of class, partisan allegiance, or any other 'special' consideration. In the case of the Bangsamoro, punitive laws are covered by the Shariah (Islamic) Law. It is commonly known amongst Muslims that the Shariah is drawn from four sources: The holy Qur'an, the *Sunna* (*hadith*, or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad) *Qiyas* (analogical reasoning) and *Ijma* (juridical consensus). However, in consideration of the resolutions passed by the BTA-parliament, only two resolutions passed out of 122 pertain to the rule of law – Resolution 80 (Deep concern over the Moro killings in Polomolok and Tupi, South Cotabato) and Resolution 91 (Condemning the rape- slay of a 16-year-old from Kabacan, North Cotabato) respectively, urging the authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. The very few resolutions passed for the application of (punitive) laws within a span of two years is indicative of dismal failure and possibly due to the hesitation in the application of the Shariah knowing that enforcing Islamic punishment at the outset may be negatively perceived as they run counter to the Philippine provision of criminal justice.

The second principle is the promotion of good governance. Good governance is the functional and constructive cooperation between the State and its citizens (Keping, 2017), in this sense the Bangsamoro government and the Bangsamoro people, and critical to its success is the *quality* of participation of the latter - for purposes of the present paper, the youth - in political administration. However, governance is only qualified to be "good" if it is participatory and at the same time consensus-oriented (Singh, Ansari & Singh, 2009), associating good governance with efficient and effective administration under a democratic framework. However, only two legislations passed by the BTA are relevant to the concept of good governance; one that explicitly encourages youth participation – Resolution No. 19 (Calling for the active participation of the youth in the administration of the Bangsamoro government) and two, Resolution No. 26 (The urgent need to constitute the intergovernmental relations body or the IGR of the Bangsamoro government), the latter being essential for effective governance. The passage of Resolution No. 19 confirms Archon Fung's (2006) notion that, indeed, the selection of *who* participates is decided by the government; and with the passage of Resolution No. 26, the very same government has also decided on the 'mechanism of involvement' of those it allows to participate in the process. These very few resolutions passed to promote good governance is an indication of a morbid disposition towards participatory governance knowing that, though Islam is not antithetical to democracy, the 'legal positivistic framework' of traditionalist and Islamicist scholars (Malik, 2019) are a pervasive social construction and interpretation in Bangsamoro governance.

The third foundational principle for Bangsamoro governance is democratic values, such as free speech, social justice and democratic decision-making, among others. Freedom of speech is a constitutionally guaranteed right for every Filipino citizen (Art 3, sec. 4 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution) inclusive of the Bangsamoro, and can be deduced from RA 11054 (Art. 4, sec. 3), where social justice is made explicit (Art. 4, sec. 7), especially in the passage of Resolution No. 43 (Creation of a Bureau for orphans and widows who are victims of war and violence), and No. 45 (Inclusive and equitable distribution of Bangsamoro resources). Democratic decision-making, however, can be derived from RA 11054 (sections 2,3, and 4), as well as from the Islamic concept of *mushawarrah* (consultation). This latter value, democratic decision-making, is exactly what Speer (2012) refers to as 'arrangements of participatory governance' which are actual strategies for increased government responsiveness and

quality of service. The non-provision of free speech under the RA 11054 is an indicator of the 'legal positivistic framework' (Malik, 2019), meaning not everyone has a voice in Bangsamoro decision-making, only those who are "called" to participate may do so, very characteristic of Ehteshami's (2003) *Shura* councils. Whether the BTA Parliament members admit it or not, their normative construction (and interpretation) of participatory governance is highly influenced by culture and context (Hay, 2002), that these would be made obvious if the national leadership had not appointed the BTA membership initially, but instead allowed the Bangsamoro to elect their leaders.

However, we need to be reminded that the essence of governance lies in its commitment to provide non-state actors with meaningful public spaces of engagement to be part of the process of policy development (Edwards et al., n.d.) or in decision-making. This makes the Bangsamoro conception of governance different, because of the way it was framed which redirected its focus from that of inclusion (the general conception of governance), to the problematic on *how* to rule.

Problematic framing

Due to the framing of governance focused on this problematic on *how* to rule, this 'intersubjectively understood context' of governance amongst the BTA members has dire consequences on their considerations for legislation, along with the consequent approved resolutions. The BTA legislation - in the form of resolutions – have instead focused on commending certain personalities for self-serving achievements (Resolution No. 18, 59, 71, 110) and sympathy messages for those who died (Resolution No. 11, 21, 46, 86, 87, 92, 103, 112), as well as Ramadhan allowances for BARMM Employees (Resolution No. 120). All of these are pieces of legislation that consumed valuable time and financial resources. And in addition, despite the framing of moral governance, the BTA members enacted Resolution No. 93 to extend their terms until June 30, 2025. Here the supposed *moral* governance narrative espoused by the Bangsamoro government has already been broken at the outset, as they have been unable to deliver the responsibilities required of them. Upon examination of the 122 BTA resolutions

within the defined timeframe, there is no indication of any of these legislations to have empowered citizens, the youth, or non-state actors to be able to share in, or at least have a say in, the control of the processes of public decision-making that affect the lives of Bangsamoro.

3.2 The youth in the Bangsamoro governance framework

Both the Bangsamoro Development Plan and the Bangsamoro Code of Governance are silent on the salience of youth participation in its governance framework. However, Resolution No. 19 of the BTA, adopted on July 29, 2019, legally enshrined active youth participation in the Bangsamoro Government. The resolution reiterates the following: (1) the critical role of the youth in nation-building, (2) encourages their involvement in public and civil affairs, (3) emphasizes youth development programs for their adaptive capacity, (4) recognizes the value of youth leadership, (5) provides for the sustained youth involvement in character building and development activities for civic efficiency, and (6) participation in structure of policy-making and program implementation. Nonetheless, the aforesaid resolution does not specify *how*. Consequently, on February 28, 2020, the BTA passed the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act Number 10, which created the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) and defining its powers, functions, and responsibilities. These are the only two legislations out of one hundred and twenty-two (122) within a span of two (2) years since the creation of the BTA which specifically mentions youth participation in the administration of the Bangsamoro government. This brings to the fore the reality that the BTA members had been preoccupied with superficial legislations that lack substantive contributions to the real issue of governance – collective decision-making.

In addition, a quick visit to the BYC website (https://byc.bangsamoro.gov.ph) and checking in on their programs for and involving the youth would indicate that the pages for these specific programs for the youth are still "under construction", almost five years after the Commission's inception. To be fair, however, the youth participation in United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Bangsamoro Youth Ideation Impact Challenge (IIC), or the

exploration of BYC of the possible collaboration with the Ateneo School of Government (on policy research and program development), or even the Bangsamoro youth involvement in the OPAPRU's (Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity) five-point youth peace and security agenda are commendable, but all are lacking in transparency, as they do not disclose how these delegation where chosen from among the Bangsamoro youth.

Participation as a construct

Participation, however, is a social construct, it is an individual's decision to make meaningful interactions with existing state structures, and is primarily driven by selfish interests, though shaped and further reshaped by the quality of those interactions with the aforementioned structures. Participation is also a choice, made to further advance one's interests, albeit advertently or inadvertently also affecting others of similar interests. Nonetheless, the current leaders of the Bangsamoro parliament intended the Bangsamoro Parliament to be a parliament of consultation and consensus-building (Yusingco, 2021). This is done so by allowing people to freely participate in the political process (RA 11054 Art. 4, Sec. 3), and giving them a reserved seat for the youth sector in Parliament (Art. VII, sec.7c). In addition, the Chairperson of the BYC is part of the expanded cabinet of the Chief Minister (Sec. 5, par. 2, Bangsamoro Autonomy Act. Number 10). These windows of opportunity accorded to them in the formal decision-making structure are governed by rules (Chhotray and Stoker, 2009) that define the interaction of the youth with the policy-making body of the Bangsamoro, the Parliament. Citizen involvement in decision-making makes citizenships in the context of participation (Turnhout, Van Bommel & Aarts, 2010). Being citizens and stakeholders, the youth need to engage with decision-makers. As citizens interact with BARMM officials, this would construct and institute new forms of interactions between citizens and officials, thus also defining and redefining the concept of "rules-in-use' in those interactions (Parsons, 2010). Given this, with very few opportunities in the formal arena, the Bangsamoro youth should then mobilize and organize themselves

into networks, an assemblage of youth networks in informal settings that can meaningfully make decisions as a collective, before their formal representative(s) engage with the members of the Parliament. This can only be done if the youth's "process of social construction" (Parsons, 2010) allows them to see how powerful their constructed identities can be especially when they move in unison in great numbers.

Meaningful participation is a social construction. A socially constructed reality simply means that when we attribute meaning to certain actions, these would be constitutive (Parsons, 2010) of an understanding of that reality. Take the case for example of the meaning attached to political participation, which is primarily an act. The meaning of this act is defined by its intent as well as its perceived effect; as the intent of participation is to influence decision-making, this entails the understanding that when one participates, he not only attempts to influence, but also empowers himself and the ideas and notions he represents. As in peace negotiations, among the reasons for active youth participation in the peace process are sense of duty, a desire to contribute and be part of the solution, as well as engagement in gainful activities (Alar, 2017). The meaning attached to participation in, as well as the passionate conviction to, the peace process is a product of social construction, understood intersubjectively by the Bangsamoro youth to be a positive aspect of democratic processes. Clearly, their political behavior, in a very constructivist sense, is shaped by the idea – a very deep understanding - that their participation is relevant, necessary, and critical to the peace process, as the lives and the future of the Bangsamoro people depend upon it.

Furthermore, the perceived effect of participation does not end with the feeling of being empowered or its desired effect, but the trust that one's participation translates to better policy formulation and better decision-making processes.

4.Conclusions

First, the Bangsamoro construct of participatory governance is framed from four sources: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *Qiyas* and the *Ijma*. These sources are not subject to any amendment at any time, and they are

permanently fixed, which can only be re-interpreted by a distinguished selection of scholars of the Islamic schools when absolutely necessary, but never to veer away from its original interpretation. This rigidity is purposely so such that ordinary men will not bend the rules (or its interpretation) to its maximum limits (without breaking them) to favor or further their self-serving agenda. Particularly, the Qur'an is already perfect by itself, establishing the Islamic way of life for Muslims, as well as for reverts. What is clear at the fore is that the Bangsamoro construct of governance, owing to its rigid sources, thus shifts the focus of governance from that of inclusive decision-making, to one of exclusivity as it redirects this focus on how to rule. As the BTA-Parliament decides on *who* participates with its ardent call for the youth to participate in governance (with BTA-Parliament Resolution No, 19) to the exclusion of all others, and on *how* they participate within structurally imbedded rules, they have inadvertently redefined participatory governance. To redefine is to reconceptualize the concept in light of its applicability, not just for purposes of comparison as Sartori (1970) puts it, but rather its immediate meaning as perceived by its intended beneficiary, the Bangsamoro youth, who are active partners in building a better *Bangsa* (nation) within the BARMM.

The way forward to ensure inclusive, thus participatory, Bangsamoro governance is to actively recast and redefine the rules that delimit participation through the democratic process of legislation by majority vote by the members of Parliament. It is recommended that legislative measures be proposed in Parliament, and be subject to majority vote, to hasten or at least enable maximum participation of the Bangsamoro constituency either through consultative assemblies or assemblies established for the purpose of popular consultations. These consultations will inform the august body of the Parliament of the real needs of the people – including sectors of women, the youth, the elderly, the poor, and the physically challenged and differently abled, among others – and be represented by their respective sectoral representatives in turn.

Second, the foundational principles of *moral* governance – rule of law, good governance and democratic values must be reexamined in the light of resolutions passed by the BTA-Parliament as they are indicative of how this form of governance is to be achieved. Mere lip service to the spirit of the law does not change the fact that legislations passed are reflective of the social reality that appointed members of the BTA Parliament are not novices in governance but are rather geniuses of manipulation and persuasion who have mastered the art of politics. At the end of the day, it is the Bangsamoro people who would suffer the most when private interests reign in a game of deception masquerading itself as representatives of the interests of the Bangsamoro.

It is recommended that transparency and accountability be enshrined as legislations by the Bangsamoro Parliament in order to counter practices that are counter-productive in Bangsamoro governance. Appointive positions must be merit-based and have clear-cut expiration dates, and elective positions must be truly reflective of the voice of the majority; thus, perhaps calling for the pushing forward of the scheduled Bangsamoro elections as scheduled, minus the postponement and delays from the national leadership.

Third, the Bangsamoro youth fit the governance framework by being able to freely participate in the political process (RA 11054 Art. 4, Sec. 3), as well as having been given a seat for sectoral representation in the Bangsamoro Parliament (Art. VII, sec.7c). These are opportunity mechanisms where the youth may channel their synergies in networks of organized interests in order to further the causes of the youth. The BTA-Parliament has provided the path for participation, the youth should take meaningful action to achieve tangible results not just in terms of policy direction, but most especially in terms of results. Legislations, in the form of resolutions, that not only broaden avenues for meaningful participation, but policies that effectively discharge from the barrel the real gamut of *moral* governance must be the target. This should include permanent eradication of any form of corruption – be it in the form of extended term limits, consumption of state resource on non-trivial legislations and pronouncements, or even commendations to personalities whose achievements have not even benefitted the ordinary Bangsamoro. Transparency and accountability will follow if

the Bangsamoro leadership is serious about this aim.

Finally, participation in governance of the Bangsamoro youth are indeed encouraged and have been evident in their active participation in the peace process, however, meaningful participation in the Bangsamoro governance framework is yet to materialize as the avenue for participation is solely dependent on the ability of the Bangsamoro Youth Commission and its leadership to engage with the arrangements of participatory governance made available to the youth by the present governance structures of the Bangsamoro as defined.

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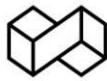
Implementing PISA Bites to Enhance Mathematics Instruction: A Pedagogical Innovation in Philippine Junior High Schools

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Abstract

The "PISA Bites Corner," a creative classroom technique incorporating PISA-like activities into Grade 8 Mathematics teaching, is investigated in this study for its pedagogical effects. Designed to boost students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and application of mathematical ideas in actual situations, the intervention established specific classroom areas for weekly PISA-like activities. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study included pre- and post-assessments together with qualitative data gathered from surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with 168 pupils and 14 teachers. Results showed noteworthy improvement in students' post-test performance and pointed up greater engagement, confidence, and analytic skill among those exposed to the PISA Bites Corner. Teachers admitted both difficulties and advantages, pointing out time limits yet confirming the worth of the method in improving student performance and encouraging pedagogical innovation. The results support the inclusion of PISA-like activities into classroom practice as a method of aligning instruction with international norms and equipping students for international assessments.

1. Introduction

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one of the most widely recognized tools for evaluating educational systems across the globe. Conducted every three years by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), PISA assesses the competencies of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science, emphasizing the application of knowledge in real-life contexts [1]. Unlike traditional assessments that prioritize content recall, PISA tasks focus on higher-order thinking, critical reasoning, and problem-solving, aiming to capture students' ability to transfer knowledge to unfamiliar situations [2].

The inclusion of real-world mathematical problems in the PISA framework reflects a broader shift in educational priorities—from rote memorization of concepts to the development of 21st-century skills. This global emphasis on application-based learning underscores the need for educational systems around the world to adapt their instructional methods and assessment strategies accordingly [3]. In response to this shift, several countries have redesigned their curricula to align with the demands of PISA, incorporating context-based, interdisciplinary tasks that foster deep learning and critical analysis [4].

In the Philippines, PISA has provided valuable insight into student learning outcomes and system-level challenges. During its initial participation in 2018, the country ranked near the bottom among 79 participating nations, with Filipino students scoring an average of 357 in mathematics—well below the OECD average of 489 [3]. The trend continued in the 2022 cycle, where the Philippines ranked 77th out of 81 countries in mathematics, registering a national average of 355 against the OECD benchmark of 472 [5]. The 2022 assessment also introduced creative thinking as an innovative domain, in which Filipino students scored an average of

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only 14 points, ranking second to last among 64 countries [6].

These recurring outcomes reveal persistent gaps in foundational skills and problem-solving ability among Filipino learners. Education experts and policymakers have attributed these gaps to several factors, including traditional teaching practices, limited classroom resources, and a curriculum that often emphasizes theoretical knowledge over practical application [7]. In response, the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched the Professional Development Program on Assessment and Emerging Literacies, which focuses on PISA-like assessment and instruction. The program aims to equip teachers with tools and training to better integrate global competencies into classroom practice [8].

Studies have shown that contextualized and cognitively demanding tasks, such as those used in PISA, significantly enhance student engagement, comprehension, and analytical thinking [9]. When embedded into regular instruction, PISA-like activities—also referred to as "PISA Bites"—can expose students to real-world scenarios, helping them connect abstract mathematical concepts to everyday problems. According to the OECD, instructional strategies that promote cognitive activation—such as presenting challenging tasks and encouraging student reasoning—are positively correlated with improved student performance [10]. Furthermore, research by the Welsh Government supports the idea that integrating PISA tasks into daily lessons leads to deeper questioning, broader understanding, and improved cross-disciplinary skills [11].

To localize this global strategy, this study introduced the "PISA Bites Corner," an innovative intervention designed to integrate PISA-like mathematical tasks into Grade 8 classrooms. The intervention involved the weekly administration of PISA-like questions posted in a dedicated classroom space— referred to as the "corner"—followed by teacher-facilitated discussions. The PISA Bites Corner aimed not only to increase familiarity with PISA-type format questions but also to develop students' ability to reason, reflect, and solve complex problems collaboratively.

Given the persistent underperformance of Filipino students in international assessments and the urgent need to enhance mathematics instruction, this study was conducted to explore whether regular exposure to PISA-like assessments can improve learners' application of mathematical concepts. Specifically, it investigates the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers in implementing the PISA Bites Corner, learners' perceptions of the intervention, and the quantitative improvement in student performance before and after its implementation. By examining these dimensions, this research sought to provide empirical evidence to inform pedagogical innovation and teacher professional development aimed at raising the quality of mathematics instruction at par with global standards.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine the implementation and effects of the PISA Bites Corner in Grade 8 Mathematics instruction. A mixed-methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a richer and more reliable understanding of the intervention's impact on student performance, engagement, and perception [12]. The quantitative component assessed students' performance through pre-, and post-tests aligned with PISA-like assessments, while the qualitative component explored experiential insights through interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions.

The PISA Bites Corner was implemented over four weeks during the third quarter of the academic year 2024-2025. Weekly tasks modeled after actual PISA mathematics items were posted in a designated classroom space and integrated into regular remedial sessions. This intervention aimed to foster students' mathematical reasoning, real-world problem solving, and critical thinking by exposing them to context-rich scenarios [13].

Table 1. Participants of the study

Participant Group	Section/Grade Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Experimental Group	Grade 8 – Section 1	37	22%
	Grade 8 – Section 2	30	18%
	Grade 8 – Section 3	17	10%
Control Group	Grade 8 – Section 4	39	23%
	Grade 8 – Section 5	29	17%
	Grade 8 – Section 6	16	10%
Total Students		**168**	**100%**
Teachers	Grade 7 Mathematics	7	50%
	Grade 8 Mathematics	7	50%
Total Teachers		**14**	**100%**

The study involved a total of 168 Grade 8 students and 14 mathematics teachers from a junior high school in the Philippines. The student participants were evenly distributed across experimental and control groups. The experimental group consisted of 84 students from three sections: Section 1 (37 students), Section 2 (30 students), and Section 3 (17 students). Similarly, the control group comprised 84 students from Section 4 (39 students), Section 5 (29 students), and Section 6 (16 students). This balanced grouping ensured comparability between the two conditions.

In addition, 14 mathematics teachers participated in the study, with seven teaching Grade 7 and seven teaching Grade 8, representing an equal distribution across these grade levels. This composition allowed for a robust integration of pedagogical insights across two consecutive levels of mathematics instruction.

2.2. Data Gathering

Pre-tests, post-tests, and interviews were employed as the primary data-gathering methods in this study. These approaches allowed the researcher to collect both measurable and experiential data to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the PISA Bites Corner intervention. Interviews, in particular, were instrumental in generating rich and diverse insights into student and teacher perceptions regarding the use of PISA-like tasks in the classroom.

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured approval from the Schools Research Coordinator of Cavite National High School, with endorsement from the school principal and the Head Teacher of the Mathematics Department. This authorization allowed the researcher to proceed with the scheduled implementation of PISA Bites Corner during the third quarter of the school year.

The data collection procedure was carried out in five key phases. Initially, the researcher administered a pre-test to both the control and experimental groups using PISA-like assessments to establish baseline performance data. Following this, the PISA Bites Corner was activated in the experimental group classrooms, where PISA-like tasks were posted weekly for a period of four weeks. These tasks were incorporated into the existing remedial sessions and accompanied by teacher-

facilitated discussions aimed at unpacking the mathematical reasoning behind each item.

In parallel, surveys and interviews were conducted with both teachers and students to gain insight into their experiences with the intervention. Focus group discussions were held separately with student participants from the experimental group to explore their engagement with the PISA Bites Corner and its perceived relevance to their learning process. A total of 18 student participants from the experimental group were purposively selected for the semi-structured interviews. The selection was based on availability, willingness to participate, and a representation of varied performance levels as indicated by the pre-test results. This ensured that both high-performing and struggling students were included. The interviews were conducted in small groups of 5–6 participants to foster open discussion while maintaining individual contributions, with each session lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. Teachers involved in the intervention were also interviewed to identify challenges, opportunities, and instructional strategies related to the integration of PISA-like tasks.

At the conclusion of the fourth week, a post-test was administered to evaluate performance gains, followed by semi-structured interviews with selected student participants. These interviews provided deeper insight into their learning experiences and attitudes toward mathematical problem solving. All interviews and discussions were documented with participant consent and later transcribed and coded for analysis.

This multi-layered approach to data collection ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's outcomes, capturing both the cognitive development and the attitudinal responses of learners toward the integration of international-standard problem-solving in everyday instruction.

2.3. Data Analysis

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the PISA Bites Corner intervention in enhancing students' mathematical performance and critical thinking skills. The integration of multiple analytical techniques allowed for a comprehensive assessment of student outcomes and perceptual insights.

To analyze the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean and standard deviation of student scores in both pre- and post-tests. This facilitated the evaluation of student performance prior to and following the intervention. The results were interpreted using a four-point mastery scale ranging from Below Basic to Advanced, which provided a clear understanding of student achievement levels [14].

In addition, a paired sample t-test was employed to identify whether there were statistically significant differences between pre- and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. This inferential test is commonly used to measure the impact of an intervention by comparing two sets of related data [15]. In this study, the t-test helped determine the extent of improvement attributed to the PISA Bites Corner strategy.

For qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted on the transcripts from interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions. This approach allowed for the systematic identification of recurring themes and patterns in the participants' responses. Thematic analysis is a widely accepted method in educational research for interpreting meaning across qualitative data sets and revealing insights into participant experiences, perceptions, and attitudes [16]. In this study, emerging themes captured student engagement, perceived usefulness of PISA-like tasks, and instructional challenges encountered by teachers.

3. Results and Discussion

Two objectives guided this research: (1) to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of the PISA Bites Corner as an instructional strategy in mathematics, and (2) to determine whether there is a significant difference in student performance on PISA-like assessments before and after the implementation of the intervention. The results of the quantitative and qualitative data gathering are presented as follows:

3.1. Challenges in Implementing the PISA Bites Corner

Figure illustrates various challenges reported by teachers in integrating the PISA Bites Corner into classroom instruction. The most prominent concerns include time constraints and lack of resources, with 13 teachers strongly agreeing with both items. This suggests that despite the pedagogical potential of the intervention, teachers struggled to find sufficient time within the existing curriculum schedule to consistently implement the weekly PISA-based tasks. This aligns with prior findings that underscore time management as a key barrier in implementing instructional innovations within rigid school structures.

Similarly, the lack of instructional resources was viewed as a major challenge. Teachers may have found it difficult to sustain the intervention without sufficient access to printed materials, task samples, or technology for content support.

Another significant concern was lack of training, where a number of teachers agreed (7 responses) or disagreed (5 responses) on its impact. This split response indicates that while some teachers felt confident implementing the strategy, others perceived a gap in professional preparation. This observation supports the call for enhanced capacity-building programs focused on the use of international assessment frameworks like PISA in everyday instruction.

Regarding student engagement, 12 teachers strongly agreed and 2 agreed that it remained a challenge. This suggests that while PISA-like tasks are inherently engaging for some students, others may require more structured scaffolding and motivational strategies to fully participate in the intervention. Lastly, room maintenance difficulty was also reported, with 8 teachers strongly agreeing and 6 agreeing. The physical setup of a dedicated PISA Bites Corner—meant to be a permanent, accessible space—appears to require continuous upkeep, which may add to teachers' existing workload and logistical burdens.
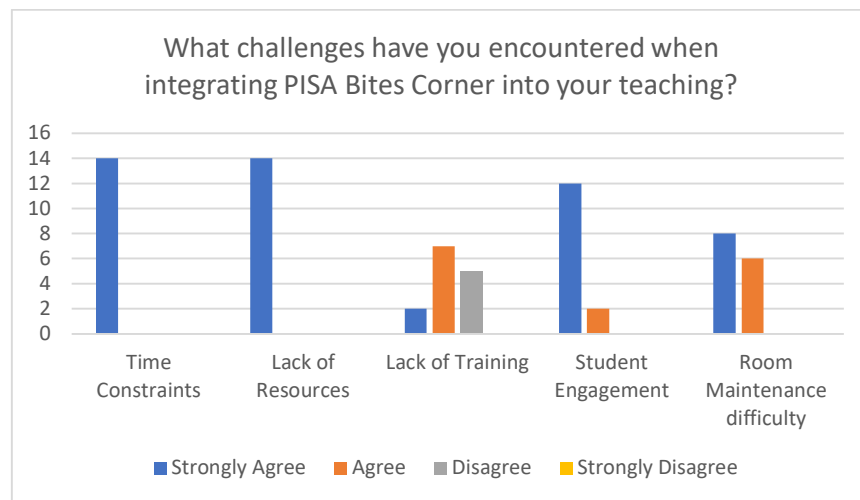

Figure 1. Challenges of PISA Bites implementation

3.2. Opportunities Observed in Using PISA Bites Corner

Despite the challenges, figure 2 reveals overwhelmingly positive perceptions about the opportunities afforded by the PISA Bites Corner. The most strongly agreed-upon benefits include the development of critical thinking (15 teachers) and professional growth (15 teachers), indicating that the intervention was seen as both pedagogically transformative and professionally enriching. These results reinforce earlier findings that PISA-like instruction promotes higher-order thinking and reflective teaching practices [14].

In terms of engagement with real-world issues, 12 teachers strongly agreed while 3 agreed. This indicates that PISA Bites activities successfully contextualize learning and help students connect mathematical concepts with everyday life—one of the foundational goals of the PISA framework.

Similarly, teachers acknowledged that the intervention enhanced analysis and interpretation skills, with 13 responses indicating strong agreement. This affirms the strategy's role in moving beyond procedural fluency to deeper conceptual understanding, particularly in word problems and situational mathematics.

In terms of collaborative learning, 10 teachers strongly agreed and 5 agreed that the intervention supported student collaboration. This likely stems from the discussion-based setup of the PISA Bites Corner, where students were encouraged to work together and share problem-solving strategies.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while the PISA Bites Corner presents certain implementation challenges—mainly logistical and resource-related—it also offers significant instructional opportunities. Teachers view it as a powerful approach to cultivating key mathematical competencies aligned with international standards.
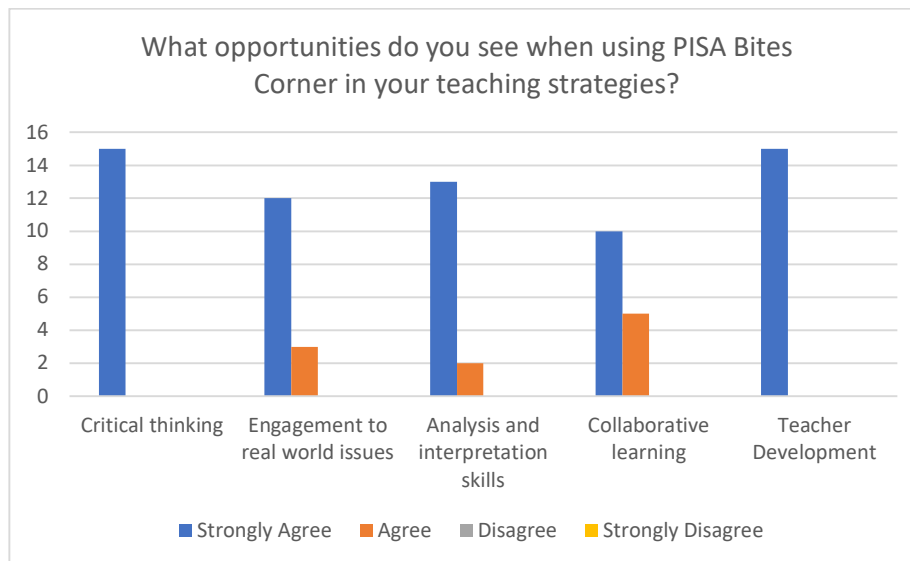

Figure 2. Opportunities of PISA Bites

3.3. Student Perceptions

Student responses regarding the PISA Bites Corner reveal largely positive perceptions, both in terms of engagement and perceived learning gains. The majority of students—over 100 respondents—described the activities as "Very Engaging and Interesting," indicating a strong sense of motivation and involvement. An additional 35 students found the activities "Engaging," suggesting that more than 80% of respondents viewed the intervention favorably. Only a minority—approximately 40 students—reported finding the activities "Not Interesting," while a very small group (around

10 respondents) labeled the intervention as "Boring."

These results suggest that the contextual, real-world nature of the PISA-like tasks may have played a role in capturing student interest. Previous research has established that students are more likely to engage deeply with content when it is perceived as relevant and applicable to real-life situations [15]. By embedding these tasks into a visible, interactive classroom space (the PISA Bites Corner), the intervention likely increased both novelty and accessibility, contributing to higher engagement levels.

In terms of learning outcomes, students most frequently identified "Problem Solving" as the primary area of improvement, with

approximately 67 respondents selecting it. This aligns with the intended design of PISA-style tasks, which are built to assess and strengthen non-routine problem-solving abilities in mathematical contexts. This was followed by "Analysis and Interpretation," selected by about 52 students, reinforcing the claim that the PISA Bites Corner facilitated the development of higher-order cognitive skills.

While fewer students (around 25) reported enhanced understanding of real-world issues, and a smaller group (18) indicated a stronger appreciation of mathematics, these figures still represent meaningful subsets of the population. These responses suggest that while the tasks were successful in strengthening core cognitive competencies, they also supported affective and contextual learning dimensions to some extent.

Only a very small number of students—approximately 6—indicated that the intervention did not help them improve in any area. This minimal level of perceived ineffectiveness may be attributable to individual differences in learning style, instructional delivery, or task difficulty. Nonetheless, the overwhelmingly positive response demonstrates that the intervention was broadly effective in engaging students and supporting key mathematical learning outcomes.

Student perception data reinforces the quantitative findings and teacher feedback, indicating that the PISA Bites Corner serves not only as an effective instructional tool for enhancing performance, but also as a means of fostering student interest, critical thinking, and problem-solving—skills essential for success in both academic and real-world settings.

3.4. Student Performance

The analysis of student performance before and after the intervention reveals a significant improvement in both the control and experimental groups, with markedly higher gains observed in the group exposed to the PISA Bites Corner.

For the control group, the mean pre-test score was 3.3864 (SD = 1.1884), interpreted as Basic level of proficiency based on the adopted mastery scale. After regular instruction without the PISA Bites intervention, the post-test mean increased to 6.3068 (SD = 1.7640), corresponding to a Proficient level. This suggests that traditional instruction contributed to a modest enhancement in students' ability to solve mathematical problems, potentially due to general learning progression over time.

In contrast, the experimental group, which participated in the PISA Bites Corner intervention, demonstrated more substantial improvement. Their pre-test mean was 3.5250 (SD = 1.1021), also interpreted as Basic level—comparable to the control group at baseline. However, after four weeks of exposure to PISA-style tasks, their post-test mean increased sharply to 8.2125 (SD = 1.3659), reaching the Advanced level of proficiency.

The results indicate that while both groups started at similar performance levels, the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly in the post-test. This improvement may be attributed to the strategic use of real-world problem-solving tasks embedded in the PISA Bites Corner, which are known to develop students' analytical reasoning, conceptual understanding, and adaptive problem-solving skills.

These findings support previous research that shows task-based, contextualized instruction aligned with global assessment frameworks—such as PISA—can lead to deeper learning and improved student achievement in mathematics. The structured routine of engaging with PISA-like problems, combined with reflective discussions during remedial sessions, likely contributed to both skill mastery and test familiarity.

The data demonstrate that the PISA Bites Corner is an effective instructional intervention, capable of significantly elevating student performance in mathematical tasks designed to mirror international standards.

Table 2: Student Performance Data

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Pair 1	Controlled Pre-Test	3.3864	88	1.1884	Basic
	Controlled Post-Test	6.3068	88	1.7640	Proficient
Pair 2	Experimental Pre-Test	3.5250	80	1.1021	Basic
	Experimental Post-Test	8.2125	80	1.3659	Advanced

3.5. Significant differences between pre and post test results

To determine the impact of the PISA Bites Corner intervention on student performance, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental groups.

For the control group, the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was 2.9205 (SD = 1.4244), with a t-value of -19.238 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a statistically significant improvement at the 0.05 level. Although this result shows that students benefited from regular classroom instruction, the magnitude of the gain remained moderate, suggesting that while learning occurred, it was likely constrained by the traditional instructional approach used.

In comparison, the experimental group, which participated in the PISA Bites Corner intervention, recorded a larger mean difference of 4.6875 (SD = 1.5144), with a t-value of -27.684 and a p-value of 0.000. This result also indicates a statistically significant improvement, but with a considerably higher gain than the control group. The strong effect size implied by the t-value supports the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing mathematical performance.

These findings demonstrate that while both groups experienced improvements over the study period, the experimental group achieved significantly greater learning gains. The use of PISA-aligned tasks, which emphasize real-world application, problem solving, and critical thinking, appears to have fostered a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. The format of the intervention—engaging tasks, consistent exposure, and reflective discussions—likely contributed to the accelerated improvement in student outcomes.

This result reinforces the growing body of research advocating for pedagogical shifts toward assessment-integrated instruction. Studies have shown that instructional strategies based on international benchmarks, such as PISA, not only improve student outcomes but also promote transferable thinking skills that are essential for 21st-century learners.

The t-test results confirm that the PISA Bites Corner had a statistically and educationally significant impact on students' mathematics performance, validating its potential for wider implementation in similar educational settings.

Table 3: T test results

	Mean	SD	t	p value	Interpretation
Controlled	2.9205	1.4244	-19.238	0.000	Significant at 0.05 level
Experimental	4.6875	1.5144	-27.684	0.000	Significant at 0.05 level

4. Conclusions

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the PISA Bites Corner as a pedagogical intervention in Grade 8 Mathematics instruction, with the aim of improving student engagement, problem-solving skills, and performance on PISA-like assessments. Grounded in both quantitative and qualitative data, the findings indicate that the integration of PISA-aligned tasks significantly enhanced the learning experience and outcomes of the experimental group compared to their peers in the control group.

The results reveal a statistically significant improvement in the post-test scores of students exposed to the intervention, with the experimental group advancing from the Basic to Advanced proficiency level. In contrast, the control group exhibited only moderate gains, moving from Basic to Proficient. This contrast underscores the value of task-based, context-rich learning in promoting deeper mathematical understanding.

Teachers identified clear instructional opportunities in implementing the PISA Bites Corner, particularly in developing critical thinking, analysis, and collaborative learning. However, they also acknowledged key challenges, such as time constraints, limited resources, and the need for targeted teacher training. Despite these barriers, the overwhelmingly positive perception among educators suggests that the intervention is both viable and scalable.

From the perspective of the learners, the PISA Bites Corner was widely perceived as engaging and meaningful. Students credited the intervention with improving their problem-solving and analytical skills—competencies that are central not only to PISA assessments but to lifelong learning.

These findings provide compelling evidence that integrating PISA-like activities into regular instruction—through a structured, student-centered approach like the PISA Bites Corner—can elevate student achievement and prepare learners for the demands of global assessments. Furthermore, the approach fosters a learning environment that promotes real-world application, critical thinking, and instructional innovation.

Future efforts to implement the PISA Bites Corner should be supported by professional development, adequate resource allocation, and sustained institutional commitment to ensure its long-term success and potential replication across other grade levels and subject areas.

5. Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are presented to various education stakeholders to support the integration, enhancement, and sustainability of the PISA Bites Corner as an instructional innovation:

5.1. Recommendations to Learners

Students are encouraged to actively participate in PISA Bites Corner activities by engaging deeply with the tasks, collaborating with peers, and reflecting on their problem-solving strategies. Learners should view these activities as opportunities to strengthen their real-world mathematical reasoning and critical thinking—skills that are essential not only for academic success but also for future careers and lifelong learning.

5.2. Recommendations to Teachers

Teachers are recommended to integrate PISA-like assessments regularly into instruction by utilizing the PISA Bites Corner as a dedicated space for higher-order thinking tasks. They should facilitate discussions that encourage analytical reasoning and real-life application of mathematical concepts. Continuous professional development on designing and implementing PISA-style questions is also essential to build teacher confidence and instructional effectiveness.

5.3. Recommendations to Schools

School administrators should support the institutionalization of the PISA Bites Corner by allocating time, space, and materials necessary for its regular implementation. Schools should also provide teachers with resources and scheduling flexibility to embed the intervention within existing curricula. Collaboration among departments is

encouraged to ensure consistency and sustainability across grade levels.

5.4. Recommendations to the Schools Division Office

The Schools Division Office is encouraged to develop policies that promote the use of PISA-aligned instructional practices, such as the PISA Bites Corner, across public schools. Division-led training and workshops should be organized to capacitate teachers and instructional leaders in designing PISA-like assessments and integrating them into daily teaching. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should also be established to assess the long-term impact of such interventions on learner achievement.

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Work Permits for Migrant Workers in Thailand: Challenges and Recommendations for Implementation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the challenges faced by migrant workers in acquiring work permits during the COVID-19 pandemic through a documentary study that compiles data from secondary sources, including laws, regulations, relevant documents, textbooks, research papers, and academic articles, composed of 7 laws and 34 volumes of documentation about migrant workers in Thailand in 2019, employing content analysis for information synthesis. Addressing the critical research gap in policy implementation about work permits for migrant workers in Thailand. It is motivated by the significant increase in the demand for identity recognition to access rights, welfare, and fair remuneration.

The research revealed that the COVID-19 epidemic is restricting permit acquisition owing to governmental measures, notwithstanding the extension of the timeline. The service method is complex, the service channel is limited, and processing is lengthy; also, the evaluation of costs for migrant worker registration is inconsistent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The regulations pertaining to the cost rate for migrant worker registration should be revised in accordance with current conditions. Government agencies should systematically establish a centralized technical system for foreign workers' data centers to collect information on both migrant workers and employers concerning current economic statistics and labour demand, thereby determining the necessary number of migrant workers to improve labour protection for migrant workers in all sectors and occupations, including the care in informal and non-standard forms of employment.

1. Introduction

The spread of COVID-19 in 2020 posed a serious global health threat. The pandemic has brought huge human and economic costs. The policy advice followed by many governments was to implement lockdowns affecting selected economic activities alongside with school closures and the restriction of movement. This early advice was later supported by reports of COVID-19 outbreaks that were registered in workplaces [1][2].

There are more and more migrant workers coming to work in Thailand nowadays. This is due to the expansion and economic growth from the agricultural sector to the industrial and service sectors [3]. The structure of the labour market creates a large demand for labour, as well as economic factors that are expanding rapidly and continuously. With the presence of multinational business investors from the west and east to establish production bases, there is a large demand for labour. In addition, some types of jobs, which Thai people see as disrespectful jobs, also known as 3D jobs, namely dirty, dangerous, and difficult rely on migrant workers from neighboring countries such as Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, etc [4][5].

Thailand is still a country with higher daily wages compared to the neighboring countries. As a result, the people of some neighboring countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos try to enter Thailand to come to work with a salary that is more than their own country by entering legally and

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smuggled in illegally. For this reason, there is a policy to manage the challenges of migrant workers in Thailand as follows: 1) Strike a balance between law enforcement and migrant worker rights protection, as appropriate, by adhering to the principles of economic stability, national security, and the stability of the labour force to ensure proper integration. 2) There should be an additional sub-committee in the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), such as a sub-committee for overseeing the human rights of migrant workers to improve the working methods of the sub-committees or working groups that have been appointed by reporting the results to the sub-committee for facilitating the administration of foreign workers in the whole system and the sub-committee for facilitating and coordinating security issues related to solving the problems of migrant workers. 3) The government sector's resources, such as budgets, personnel, tools, and equipment, must be properly allocated so as to be in line with the management of more and more foreign workers entering Thailand, as well as to create cooperation with the public sectors and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). 4) The Ministry of Public Health should collaborate with other related government sectors, consider allocating budgets for health care services, determining more options for providing health insurance for migrant workers as well as relying on cooperation with private hospitals and clinics to participate in more migrant workers' health insurance programs. 5) The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare should play an active role in ensuring that migrant workers are protected in accordance with labour law. In general, it should increase the number of labour inspectors and monitor establishments that employ special migrant workers. 6) The government should protect migrant workers who come to work in the country. It should be monitored whether migrant workers are working as agreed with the recruitment agency or agencies and there should be clear sanctions against brokers who defraud migrant workers along with providing accurate information to employers and workers to prevent scams from recruiters. 7) Reducing the year-to-year pressure to hire greater number of migrant workers. It should speed up the restructuring of production allowing entrepreneurs to turn to technology instead of using cheap labour but

low productivity, which will help Thailand to maintain a competitive advantage in the global market. In other words, the government should vigorously support the reduction of the employment of low-skilled migrant workers by creating appropriate incentives as well as elevating the issue of migrant workers to the national agenda. 8) On the issue of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) proposal, the government should facilitate migrant workers from neighboring countries who enter legally to be able to apply for work permits in the country more conveniently. To reduce the process and cost of importing migrant workers from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar and expedite the establishment of a One Stop Service (OSS) system between Thailand and neighboring countries of all nationalities for the process of nationality verification, work permit applications, and appointing officials to be directly responsible, as well as the decentralization of power to the provincial level, especially for early-morning workers and seasonal workers. 9) An efficient and clear database system should be created for migrant workers entering Thailand urgently. To use common goals for all parties involved in labour in security matters and the quality of life of workers. 10) Encourage and promote the Asian labour market's expansion and labour mobility in order to achieve more comparable skill standards [6].

For the registration of workers, workers can be registered per license in the country. Group 1: Domestic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed four years ago on March 31, 2021. Group 2: People who had a pink card that must be carried out in accordance with the Cabinet Resolutions on August 20, 2020 (Nationality Proving Group OSS, Pink Card Group) but not implemented. Group 3: Notification of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) more than 30 days in advance, change of employer on time. Group 4: Aliens holding border pass cards.

The migrant workers must have a work permit, which is a document issued to foreigners or migrant workers to confirm that they can work legally. Work permit renewal allows them to apply for renewal before the license expires by one month and the work permit can be renewed for no more than 2 years at a time. Subsequently, the migrant work permit was converted into the E-Work Permit,

which is a work permit issued through a computer system in the form of a plastic card or smart card, which is easy to carry. There is a protection system against forged documents that is effective and efficient. The staff can use a smartphone to check the QR Code that appears on the card. This will greatly facilitate and support security officials in the investigation of migrant workers [7].

Nevertheless, there was still a challenge in the registration process and the process was delayed, although Thailand has several laws related to the management of migrant workers, including the Immigration Act, Migrant Worker Act, Foreign Worker Act, Labour Protection Act, Foreign Business Act, Occupational decree and professions that are prohibited by foreigners, Investment Promotion Act, Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand Act, Special Export Act and Human Trafficking Act. The management of migrant workers involves many laws, causing many agencies and government officials to be involved, therefore affecting management's effective law enforcement and compliance [8].

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic caused many businesses to shut down for extended periods. As a result, workers lost their income, with some being laid off due to the prolonged business disruptions and government-imposed health measures. As a result, employers have to surrender to this situation. Workers are entitled to social security; however, it was found that these workers decided not to register for compensation because they did not understand their rights to social security payments, largely due to a lack of understanding of their rights and the inability of some workers to communicate in Thai. All registration documents are in the Thai language which made the registration process seem overly complicated and inaccessible for them. Additionally, accessing medical treatment often required long-distance travel, resulting in significant costs. As a result, most workers decided not to register for compensation [9] [10].

From the above-mentioned challenges, the authors gathered information from secondary documents such as laws, regulations, related documents, textbooks, books, research papers, academic articles in order to propose the recommendations in response to the relevant challenges. The following data analysis methods were used.

2. Objectives of the Study

To analyze the challenges encountered by migrant workers in Thailand in obtaining work permits during the COVID-19 pandemic and to synthesize the recommendations in response to the challenges.

3. Data and Methodology

This study adopts a documentary research approach, collecting data from secondary sources such as laws, regulations, relevant documents, textbooks, research papers, and academic articles, employing content analysis for information synthesis.

4. Review of Literatures

Globalization and economic forces have resulted in migrant workers being smuggled in illegally, both registered and unregistered. The driving factors for migrant workers include the insecurity of life and property due to domestic conflict, unemployment and poverty, but migrant workers are also faced with exploitation by the agencies, negative working conditions, physical abuse and sexual harassment violence from officials, and also the ethnic bias.

The study found that the Royal Decree on Occupations and Occupations Prohibited for Foreigners, B.E. 2522, contains vague descriptions and ambiguous classifications for certain occupations.

The enforcement of the Foreign Worker Management Emergency Decree B.E. 2560 can be affected in consideration in terms of necessity. "The unavoidable necessity" and in Section 131 Paragraph 2, the employer has the power to seize the work permit or the employee's identity document if the employee agrees. The provisions herein are contradictory to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Families (ICRMW) in Article 21, which states that: "Employers of migrant workers are prohibited from seizing passports and clearly states that only authorized government officials are allowed to seize or destroy licenses, a border pass, a residence permit or a work permit." And this provision is contrary to the provisions in Section 6/1 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act B.E. 2551 stipulates

that "Confiscation of that person's identity document is a form of forced labour or service in which those who do so will be guilty of human trafficking." According to the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, B.E. 2551, the restriction of the employee's right to travel and the right to take advantage of their property.

In addition, in terms of materials, equipment and technology, it was found that the operators had a shortage of modern and efficient office supplies and technology. In terms of personnel, it was found that the operators still lacked of language skills. Language is an important element in the communicative process that has a profound influence on migrant workers' ability to modify ethnic identity [11]. While the threat of COVID-19 is indiscriminate, the impact of the virus does discriminate. Migrant workers' health, well-being and livelihoods, and that of their families and communities, are being disproportionately impacted, yet these workers are being predominantly excluded by government policy responses to the crisis. The pandemic has underlined that migrant workers, especially migrant workers, are often excluded from accessing the COVID-19 support measures implemented by the countries in which they work, including financial support packages, wage subsidies, income support, and social protection [12].

5. Results and Discussions

The results of the analysis of challenges and recommendations in the management of migrant workers found that:

5.1 Challenges in the work structure because applying for a foreign worker permit must follow bureaucratic steps. There is a lot of documentation, and it has to be carried out according to the prescribed procedures. Even during the COVID-19 outbreak, examples of the problems include: 1) incomplete documentation of migrant workers [13]. 2) during the COVID-19 epidemic situation, resulting in service restrictions and measures that must be followed by the government. As a result, migrant workers cannot access the foreign worker registration service. 3) The service process is complicated, and there are limited-service channels. 4) The calculation of the cost of applying for a foreign worker's registration is inconsistent with the COVID-19

epidemic situation; 5) Prolonged processing times [14] affected migrant workers' ability to access medical treatment, as they lacked valid labour licenses. Without access to treatment, they became more likely to spread the disease. It can be observed from the data on the outbreak in construction worker camps.

5.2 Challenges related to employer liability arise when foreigners work illegally. These workers lack valid licenses, and the penalties for employers are relatively low compared to the profits gained from their businesses. As a result, employers often neglect to renew labour permits.

5.3 Challenges of illegality of foreign workers in the case of not having a work permit. It may lead to social crimes because of a lack of income. It is a time when foreign workers lack income and have no stability in their lives. If you are sick, you cannot be cured. Therefore, it may cause crime and violence.

5.4 Challenges in the lack of knowledge about related laws of the officer to manage migrant workers, such as foreign labour law, immigration law, public health, work regulations, work procedures, announcements of the Cabinet, and lack of language skills for communicating with migrant workers. Migrant workers will receive treatment rights according to the type of health insurance they receive, depending on the nature of the work they do and the type of worker registration. In addition, most healthcare units in Thailand do not provide translation or interpreting services. This limits the right to access services because of communication between officials and migrant workers. The corruption of government officials has caused more illegal migrant workers to be smuggled into the country. A lot of information must be considered, including the amount of registered capital of the establishment, the type of business of the establishment, job positions and job descriptions, and the duration of permission, which will be determined by the performance of the establishment. This makes migrant workers a vulnerable group, and their livelihoods are at risk.

5.5 Challenges related to the working law of foreign workers found that the Royal Decree on Occupations and Professions that prohibits foreigners from doing B.E. 2522, as a result, restricted the employee's right to travel and the right to take advantage of their property.

Problems with the structure of benefits and policy-level problems were found. For example, migrant workers often work in industries that pose high health risks, such as construction, marine fishing, or industries that require high exposure to chemicals. There is the possibility of risk occurring at any time, but the social security criteria require that migrant workers have made contributions for at least three months before they can use their medical treatment rights. During these three months, the Ministry of Public Health requires them to purchase temporary health insurance worth 1,047 baht instead, which can be considered an increase. The cost burden on workers has increased [15].

Kaewna [16] suggested that entrepreneurs should be encouraged to learn migrant languages.Both entrepreneurs and migrant workers in neighboring countries must learn migrant languages. Additionally, Nakaray & Benjarongkij [17] argue that using different accents can lead to racial discrimination, stereotypical views, and Thai employers reflecting the top-down power distancing. There is a hierarchical work structure that requires employees to remain under employer control and follow directives.

Thongpan [18] further explained the challenge of workers who still lack understanding of common policy, and fees for preparing licenses. In addition, bail fees for foreign workers are high according to Guadagno [19]. In some countries, migrants are still being asked to comply with administrative requirements for status determination, visa application, and renewal. However, complying with procedures and schedules became challenging as offices and service providers closed or limited their operating hours, and movement was restricted. Office closures and appointment rescheduling translate into delayed procedures and prolonged uncertainty, and risking stays in detention and reception centres.

Based on the above analysis, the following proposals are recommended for improving migrant worker management: 1) The Foreign Workers Administration Office should improve its internal management systems, including implementing job rotation to enhance staff capacity. 2) Rules should be changed to regulate the cost of filing migrant workers registration, the conditions for migrant workers requesting a license's period of registration, and the preparation of various documents to prove nationality, including the process of returning migrant workers to their country of origin. 3) There should be rules or guidelines for promoting migrant workers' rights, equality, and opportunity, including treating migrants and Thai workers equally in terms of employment conditions, organization, and collective bargaining. 4) There should be more channels for migrant workers' registration [20]. 5) The central technology system of the migrant labour data center should be systematically built to collect information for both foreign workers and employers. Current economic data and labour demand should be surveyed and analyzed to determine the appropriate number of migrant workers and to be used as information to adjust policies and measures to manage migrant workers appropriately in accordance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) [21]. 6) The penalty rate for employers should be increased in cases where foreign workers do not have a license [22]. This additionally involves in improving labour protection for migrant workers in all sectors and occupations, including the care, green, and digital economies, as well as in informal and non-standard forms of employment. Where practical, the protection should be gender-responsive and equal to the protection of national workers and should cover issues such as fundamental workers' rights, an adequate wage, limits on hours of work, and safe and healthy workplaces. What's more, all relevant laws, rules and regulations both national and international levels should be consolidated into the same alignment and direction.

6. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted migrant workers in Thailand, leading to a reduction in working days and subsequent revenue decline. A notable challenge identified was the inability of migrant workers to communicate in Thai, which hindered their access to vital information, partly due to registration documents being exclusively in Thai and the complexity of processes such as acquiring medical treatment. The management of migrant workers faced intricate issues, mostly categorized into legal obstacles, deficiencies in equipment and technology, and constraints in personnel. These structural

deficiencies collectively obstructed migrant workers' access to essential benefits and welfare. The insights obtained from this analysis seek to enhance the implementation of labour management techniques, highlighting a persistent focus on human security. The paper advocates for a paradigm shift, asserting that migrant workers should be regarded not alone as economic assets but also in relation to the advancement of human rights protection principles. It emphasizes the imperative of establishing effective mechanisms to appropriately distribute migrant labour legislation, guaranteeing sufficient education for both employers and migrant workers.

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