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DIGGING DEEPER INTO BARRIERS TO RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY IN PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION

Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar¹

Abstract

In the Philippines, many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) fall short in the area of research. Several studies have already assessed the research competencies of Filipino educators, highlighting the need for improvement in this field. However, even with HEIs providing programs addressing this issue, research accomplishments still do not meet the standard. This raises the question of whether previous research has truly uncovered the real obstacles that educators face in terms of research productivity. Guided by a descriptive-concurrent mixed methods research design, this study sought to determine the primary reasons why many Filipino educators do not present at research conferences and have few publications. Results revealed that key barriers include systemic bias in favor of Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journals, the high costs of presenting and attending research conferences, and the expense of publishing work, which many educators found demotivating. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness of free conferences and journals that offer free publication, the reasons for which have also been identified. The findings provide valuable insights into opportunities for developing new policies and initiatives to enhance educators' engagement in research, and in addressing current practices that may help improve the research landscape in the country.

Keywords

research productivity issues, professional development in research, Philippine higher education, concurrent mixed methods, Filipino educators

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INTRODUCTION

Academic research aims to enhance human understanding in various fields (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Its primary objective is to generate new knowledge that drives progress and improves lives. This type of research is based on scientific principles and follows a specific methodology to ensure accuracy and minimize the risk of false conclusions. Consequently, academic research is essential for the growth and development of institutions, benefiting not only students but also society and the nation as a whole. Das (2017) emphasized the significance of research in academic institutions, particularly in a globalized world. It has been explained that knowledge-driven growth, founded on innovation, is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and advancement of these institutions. Additionally, the pursuit of knowledge is at the core of research, and the quality of research work directly impacts the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. This, in turn, benefits students, society, and the country in general (Sultana, 2019). By promoting research, academic institutions can foster progress and innovation, leading to a deeper understanding of fundamental principles and the creation of new knowledge that can shape lives and the world.

Conducting research has become a vital component of professional development programs for teachers around the world. In the Philippines, the Department of Education [DepEd], through the implementation of DepEd Order No. 39, series of 2016, and the Commission on Higher Education [CHED], through the DBM-CHED Joint Circular No. 01, series of 2022, emphasize the importance of research. These policies encourage teachers from both private and public educational institutions to conduct research for their professional development and to identify and address teaching and learning challenges in their classrooms and schools (Department of

Budget and Management & CHED, 2022; DepEd, 2016; Ulla et al., 2017). As a result, research has become a mandatory component of teachers' performance evaluations and appraisals at the end of the school year (Ulla, 2016).

Moreover, research is one of the trifocal functions of faculty members in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), alongside teaching and community extension services (Peñaredondo-Untong, 2020). This mandates university faculty to play a crucial role in the academic and professional development of competent, service-oriented, and principled citizens through research. Accrediting agencies have also recognized the significance of research, making it a key criterion for assessing the quality of education provided by institutions. For instance, the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities [PAASCU] includes research as Area 7 in its 2021 Accreditation Guidebook (PAASCU, 2021). Similarly, the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation [PACUCOA] lists "Research Productivity as a Tool for Institutional Effectiveness" as Criterion 2 for assessing programs seeking Level IV accreditation (PACUCOA, 2020).

Educators can also benefit from conducting research by enhancing their professional growth and demonstrating how they are expanding their own professional knowledge. One of the ways educators can examine their own practices is by undertaking action research, which allows them to assess whether they are meeting their own expectations and the criteria or standards used to evaluate their work (Francisco et al., 2023; Ocal, 2018). Duran et al. (2012) also suggested that engaging in research can significantly improve educators' foundational and technical skills, positively impacting their preparedness to use technological tools in the classroom. Additionally, engaging research dissemination activities such as presenting at research conferences provides educators with opportunities

to receive feedback, gain new ideas, and receive suggestions for improvement, leading to future collaborations and higher-quality research with greater impact (Corwin et al., 2018; Knott et al., 2020). Similarly, publishing research in academic journals helps educators gain recognition and promotion while contributing to the broader educational community's professional development (Anderson, 2021; Khasawneh et al., 2023; Wong, 2014). Consequently, these foster a sense of professionalism, community, and identity development (Rimmer & Floyd, 2020).

Research is more than just an additional task for educators; it plays a significant role in the development of education systems and society as a whole. Conducting quality research not only ensures the delivery of high-quality education in higher education institutions that is essential for the nation's future, but also enhances educators' qualifications for promotion and professional growth. However, despite these perceived benefits, producing quality research among Filipino educators remains a challenge. Many HEIs struggle in this area, particularly during accreditation. According to Ulla et al. (2017) and Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007), a significant number of educators in the Philippines have conducted little to no research, with few having presented or published their work. Several studies have identified key reasons behind low research productivity, not only in the Philippines but also globally. The most frequently cited barriers include financial constraints, lack of awareness, and low confidence in one's research abilities (Alotaibi, 2023; Landingin et al., 2024; Okoduwa et al., 2018; Quimbo & Sulabo, 2013; Sayao et al., 2023). Other contributing factors include limited funding, insufficient institutional support, and lack of interest in research (Abrugena et al., 2020; Flores, 2024; Wa-Mbaleka, 2015).

Despite these findings, the issue remains complex. This is particularly puzzling given that governing authorities and

HEIs have implemented various interventions to address these concerns, such as financial support and policies emphasizing research as a primary responsibility of educators through training programs (Quitoras & Abuso, 2021; Wa-Mbaleka & Gomez, 2017), and many, if not all, educators are likely aware of these opportunities before entering the profession. Examples of such support include CHED Regional Office III Memorandum 146, Series of 2021, which calls for research proposals eligible for funding (CHEDRO III, 2021), and the ongoing research grants provided by the National Research Council of the Philippines. These considerations suggest that, despite numerous studies on the topic, the true obstacles to research productivity may not yet be fully understood, underscoring the need for further investigation.

This study is among the few that sought to determine the primary reasons for the limited research productivity of Filipino educators. However, it is potentially the first to uncover unconventional barriers to participation in research conferences and journal publications; barriers that arise not from the educators' own capacities but from the shortcomings of HEIs. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do financial difficulties, lack of confidence in research, and lack of awareness of research presentation and publication opportunities serve as barriers to research productivity?
2. What are the primary sources Filipino educators rely on to obtain information about research conferences where they could potentially present their work, as well as the sources they use to identify suitable research journals for publication?
3. Are there significant differences in educators' perceptions of the pre-determined barriers; financial difficulties, awareness of conferences and journals, and lack of confidence, when

grouped according to age, sexuality, and highest educational attainment?

4. What additional barriers, aside from financial difficulties, lack of confidence in research, and lack of awareness of presentation and publication opportunities, do educators face?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Challenges to research productivity all over the world

Globally, many HEIs struggle with achieving high research productivity, largely due to the low research output of educators. In Pakistan, Iqbal and Mahmood (2011) identified heavy teaching loads as a major obstacle to research writing and presentation, with administrative duties further contributing to it. Similarly, research output among educators remains a challenge in Afghanistan; Orfan et al. (2024) found that 82% of educators in public HEIs in northern Afghanistan had never published in indexed international journals such as Web of Science, Scopus, or PubMed, while 54% had not published in any international journal in the previous year, citing a lack of funding as a key barrier. In Japan, young faculty members also face challenges in research productivity. Oyama et al. (2015) attributed this issue to limited research skills, insufficient resources, and a lack of mentoring services.

The situation in Tanzanian higher education is similar, with many educators falling short of research productivity expectations. Kadikilo et al. (2024) identified two categories of barriers: institutional and individual. Educators cited inadequate research funding, heavy workloads, weak collaboration, fragmented research policies, limited mentorship opportunities, and a lack of formal rewards and incentives as key institutional challenges. On an individual level, limited interest in research and a lack of research expertise further contributed to

low productivity. Similarly, a study by Farzaneh et al. (2016) found that in Iran, professors face multiple obstacles when conducting research. Personal barriers include limited English proficiency, while work-related challenges stem from strict administrative policies, which make it difficult for professors to allocate time for research due to their demanding workloads. Beyond these commonly cited barriers, this research highlighted an overlooked yet critical issue: the failure of HEIs to provide adequate access to research-related information and dissemination opportunities, further hindering educators' research productivity.

Research productivity in the Philippines

The Philippines ranks 5th in research productivity among Southeast Asian nations (Guido & Orleans, 2020). The country has made significant progress, increasing its research output from just three publications in 1996 to 170 in 2018, which is an annual growth rate of 19.19% over 23 years. In total, the Philippines recorded 898 publications, placing it behind Thailand with 2,345, but ahead of Vietnam with only 488. Within the country, the most research-productive higher education institutions (HEIs) are predominantly publicly owned (Gopez et al., 2024). Geographically, the National Capital Region (NCR) leads in research productivity, followed by Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, respectively. This trend suggests that research output is concentrated in government-funded institutions and prestigious universities, as NCR is home to many of these. However, it also highlights a concerning disparity: despite Mindanao having more public HEIs and a greater number of HEIs overall compared to the NCR (Commission on Higher Education, 2020), research productivity in Mindanao remains the lowest.

Numerous studies have examined the research productivity of educators in the Philippines. Palmiano (2024) reported low

research output among educators at a public university, where only 27.5% of conducted research was presented in 2022, 25% in 2020, and just 3.1% in 2021. Publication rates were even lower, with only 3 of 12 completed studies published in 2021, 1 of 65 in 2020, and 2 of 40 in 2022, resulting in a mere 5.1% publication rate. These findings align with those of Monsura et al. (2022), who found that approximately 75% of educators did not engage in research production, presentation, or publication, with overall participation below 26%. A similar trend was observed in a public university in northern Philippines, where only 46% of faculty members conducted research, 25% presented their outputs at conferences, and just 8.33% published their work (Cocal et al., 2017).

This issue is not limited to public HEIs. Etcuban et al. (2016) found that faculty members at a private HEI in central Philippines exhibited low research productivity despite the availability of financial assistance and cash incentives from the university. Their research output in journal and book publications, conference presentations, and research projects remained minimal. These findings suggest that while financial constraints are a significant barrier to research productivity in many HEIs, personal factors such as time management, research knowledge, and technical skills also play a crucial role.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

While numerous studies have evaluated research productivity in various countries, including the Philippines, and explored factors contributing to low research output and publication rates among educators, few have examined educators' familiarity with research conference presentation and research journal publication. As a result, the reasons behind limited

research output remain only partially understood and are often attributed to financial constraints, lack of academic writing skills, and low confidence in research abilities.

This study shifts the focus to the research dissemination process itself rather than relying solely on perceptions or opinions, aiming to uncover the true barriers to research productivity. For instance, a lack of awareness about the existence of free-to-publish journals may present a greater obstacle than financial difficulties. Similarly, low research output may stem from pressure to publish in specific journals rather than from the perceived value of research in an educator's career. Moreover, this limited awareness of free-to-publish journals, free-to-present research conferences, and the research dissemination process as a whole, may not stem from disinterest but rather from HEIs' failure to effectively communicate these opportunities. This, in turn, may be linked to the limited knowledge of research heads in HEIs in the Philippines.

This research sought to further examine the reasons behind the limited participation of Filipino educators in research conferences and their low publication rates in academic journals. To provide a clearer understanding of the situation, the study also explored the primary sources Filipino educators rely on to discover research conferences where they can present their work, as well as the sources they use to identify suitable research journals for publication. This analysis helped determine the extent of their exposure to research opportunities. Additionally, the study examined significant differences in educators' perceptions of pre-determined barriers; financial difficulty, awareness of conferences and journals, and lack of confidence, when grouped according to age, sexuality, and highest educational attainment. These findings would facilitate the development of targeted training programs tailored to specific groups.

Research design

This study employed a descriptive-concurrent mixed-methods research design to achieve its objectives. This approach enables the simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research question (Creswell et al., 2003). By using this design, the questionnaire was structured to include both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, which respondents answered in a single sitting. Unlike the explanatory mixed-methods design, where quantitative data is gathered first and followed by qualitative interviews to interpret the results, or the exploratory mixed-methods design, where the process is reversed, the concurrent approach used in this study required all respondents to answer both qualitative and quantitative questions simultaneously.

Tools for data collection

The study employed a survey method using a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions for the quantitative component. Among these, three questions gathered demographic information, including respondents' age, sexuality, and highest educational attainment, while the remaining 17 questions focused on identifying barriers to research engagement among educators. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in educational research, while two potential respondents assessed it for clarity and comprehension. Additionally, open-ended interview questions were used to explore further reasons behind educators' limited participation in research and to identify the sources they rely on for information about research conferences and journals.

Population and sampling procedure

Due to the unavailability of exact data on the total number of educators in Philippine higher education institutions, provided that educators come and go, this study limited its sample to 300 randomly selected educators from various regions in the country. The final sample included respondents from 13 higher education institutions across Region I, Region III, Region IV-A and B, NCR, Region VIII, Region IX, and Region X. The decision to sample 300 respondents was based on statistical considerations, as 100 is generally regarded as the minimum sample size necessary for meaningful results (Fox, 2022). Additionally, applying Slovin's Formula, which is commonly used when population data is available, typically results in a sample size of around 300 when using a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level.

Data analysis

Frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were computed to analyze the levels of agreement among respondents, where 1.00–1.75 was equivalent to strongly disagree and interpreted as false, 1.76–2.50 was equivalent to disagree and interpreted as somehow false, 2.51–3.25 was equivalent to agree and interpreted as somehow true, and 3.26–4.00 was equivalent to strongly agree and interpreted as true. To determine significant differences based on respondents' profiles, T-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted. Meanwhile, Thematic Analysis was used to process and analyze qualitative data from open-ended responses.

Ethical considerations

No person was forced to participate in the study, as participation was strictly voluntary. Respondents expressed their willingness to participate by signing an informed consent form

before answering the questions. To ensure anonymity, no personal information that could directly identify respondents was collected, except for age, sexuality, and educational attainment, which were necessary for the study's objectives. All collected personal data were kept confidential during the research process and were immediately disposed of after analysis. Data privacy laws, particularly Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 in the Philippines, were strictly followed to uphold the privacy rights of respondents. Additionally, ethical guidelines established by the Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, specifically those outlined in the document "Ethics in Social Sciences and Humanities", were considered. These measures ensured the highest standards of ethical conduct, safeguarding the rights and welfare of all respondents throughout the study.

RESULTS

Perception on pre-determined barriers to research productivity

Financial difficulty

Data in Table 1 suggest that financial challenges being a barrier in terms of participating in research conferences and publishing work is somehow true, with a mean score of 2.98. The surveyed educators expressed that they limit the number of conferences they attend and publish fewer papers due to high registration and publication fees, as well as a lack of knowledge on where to seek funding. These findings align with studies by Duracinsky et al. (2017) and Raby and Madden (2021), which highlighted financial constraints as a barrier preventing researchers from attending conferences and publishing their work. This underscores the need for financial support from higher education institutions and the

government. However, numerous free research conferences exist, which indicates that there is more to know behind this problem. Free research conference includes the National Research Conference on Physical Education hosted by Don Honorio Ventura State University, the 2nd CDSGA Research Gala: Gabrielian Festival hosted by Colegio de San Gabriel Arcangel, and the 2nd Asian Summit on Business, Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Hospitality, funded and hosted by Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. Similarly, several reputable journals offer free publication, including the Tourism and Sustainable Development Review Journal by Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia, in partnership with Research Synergy Press; the Journal of Global Awareness by St. John's University, USA; Issues in Educational Research by Institutes for Educational Research in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia; and the Journal of Educational Studies by Adventus University, Cernica. Therefore, the real challenge for educators is not financial limitations but a lack of awareness regarding these opportunities, leading them to assume that research dissemination always requires significant financial investment when, in fact, free options are available.

Table 1.

Financial difficulty as a barrier in research conference presentation and research publication

Statements	Mean	Descriptive Meaning
I limit the conferences I attend because they are costly; I need financial resources to be able to present.	2.98	Agree
I have a limited budget, making it difficult for me to join conferences.	2.82	Agree
I don't have many research publications in journals because the publication fees are expensive.	3.01	Agree

My budget is limited, so I cannot afford to pay for journal publication fees.	3.08	Agree
I do not know where to find funding to support my conference presentations and journal publications.	3.03	Agree
Composite Mean	2.98	Agree

Lack of awareness in presentation and publication opportunities

Table 2 shows that educators are well-informed about professional development opportunities in research, indicating that it is false to think that a lack of awareness, specifically regarding research conferences and publishing in journals, is a barrier to research productivity, with a mean score of 1.75. The table reveals that the educators have a strong understanding of the benefits of presenting at research conferences and publishing in journals, as well as where to find information about these opportunities. They also recognize that research conferences and journals provide platforms for sharing their research findings, contributing to the existing body of knowledge and its practical applications, which is the fundamental purpose of conducting research. These findings demonstrate a high level of awareness of the importance of research engagement among Filipino educators, including its contributions to their fields of specialization, professional practice, and society. These also show that they are motivated to participate in research-related activities. This is consistent to the situation in Nigeria, where Okoduwa et al. (2018) found that the majority of educators and researchers consider research vital for their organization and believe that it should be mandatory for all academic staff.

Table 2.*Lack of awareness as a barrier in research conference presentation and research publication*

Statements	Mean	Descriptive Meaning
I am not aware that a research conference serves as a platform for sharing the findings of my study.	1.74	Strongly Disagree
I am not aware that presenting at conferences can enhance my qualifications as an educator.	1.67	Strongly Disagree
I am not aware that research conferences can be conducted online, face-to-face, or in a hybrid format.	1.50	Strongly Disagree
I do not know where to find research journals where I can publish my research.	2.15	Disagree
I am not aware that publishing in research journals will boost my qualifications as an educator.	1.70	Strongly Disagree
Composite Mean	1.75	Strongly Disagree

Lack of confidence

Educators do not view confidence as an obstacle to their participation in research conferences or publishing their research, indicating that a lack of confidence is likely a somewhat false barrier to research productivity, with a mean score of 2.17, as seen in Table 3. They expressed confidence in the quality of their research papers, believing that they are likely to be accepted for presentation and publication should they submit them. Moreover, they feel comfortable speaking in public and believe they can handle questions raised during conferences. These findings suggest that educators are willing and able to present their research at conferences and publish it in journals if given the opportunity. These results are consistent with Balangon (2022), who found that Filipino

educators are highly competent in writing research papers. These also indicate that Filipinos share the same belief with Pakistanis who do not exhibit apprehension or unease toward research, as engaging in research activities does not induce stress or nervousness in them (Khan et al., 2018). However, they contradict the study of Maravilla (2020), which revealed that anxiety prevented Filipino educators at a provincial university from engaging in research. Nevertheless, given the broader scope of the present study, the results are deemed to be a better representation of educators in the country.

Table 3.

Lack of confidence as a barrier in research conference presentation and research publication

Statements	Mean	Descriptive Meaning
I am not comfortable speaking in public, so I feel hesitant to present at research conferences.	2.09	Disagree
I am hesitant to submit my paper to conferences because I feel that it is not good enough to pass their review.	2.27	Disagree
I am afraid that my research might be rejected by journals, so I feel hesitant to submit my paper for publication.	2.23	Disagree
I am afraid that I might not be able to answer questions raised during conferences, so I don't join as many conferences as possible.	2.05	Disagree
I am not confident enough in research writing, and I think that my work might not be of high quality.	2.22	Disagree
Composite Mean	2.17	Disagree

Comparison of the three pre-determined barriers

Table 4 shows that among the pre-determined factors serving as barriers to the research engagement of Filipino educators, financial difficulty recorded the highest mean score,

indicating that it is the primary reason why the production of quality research and maximum engagement in research activities among Filipino educators remain a challenge. This issue places HEIs in a delicate position during accreditation. On the other hand, a lack of confidence in presenting at conferences and publishing research in journals is only perceived to be somewhat of a barrier, meaning that the number of educators with a low level of trust in their abilities and those who see themselves as competent are relatively close. Meanwhile, a lack of awareness regarding research engagement opportunities, including the significance and benefits of research, has been determined not to be a contributing factor to the dilemma faced by many Philippines HEIs. Additionally, it was found that the differences among these variables were significant.

Table 4.

Summary of factors that serve as barriers in research conference presentation and research publication

Variables	Mean	Descriptive Meaning	Interpretation	Significance Difference
1. Financial Difficulty as barrier in accessing professional development in research	2.98	Agree	Somehow True	.000
2. Lack of Awareness on conferences and publication opportunities as barrier in accessing professional development in research	1.75	Strongly Disagree	False	.000
3. Lack of Confidence on engaging in research as barrier in accessing professional development in research	2.17	Disagree	Somehow False	.000

Significant differences of educators' perception when grouped based on profile

Age

Data revealed significant differences in educators' perceptions of financial difficulty, lack of awareness, and lack of confidence as barriers to research conference presentations and research publication when grouped by age, as seen in Table 5. Results indicate that educators aged 48–57 and 58 years and above rated financial difficulty as the highest barrier to research engagement, whereas those aged 28–37 rated it the lowest. This suggests that millennial educators either have a larger budget allocated for research engagement or are more aware of the existence of funded conferences and journals. Meanwhile, educators aged 58 and above demonstrated the lowest level of awareness regarding the significance of research and the least confidence in research engagement. This indicates a weaker appreciation for and intention toward conference presentations and research publication. In contrast, educators aged 18–27 showed the highest levels of awareness and confidence, recording the highest mean scores. This suggests that younger educators highly recognize the importance of research and possess strong confidence in their research abilities, leading them not to perceive a lack of awareness or confidence as barriers to engaging in research activities.

Table 5.

Significant difference in the perception towards financial difficulty, lack of awareness, and lack of confidence as barriers in research conference presentation and research publication when grouped according to age

Variables	Mean Square	F	Significance
1. Financial Difficulty as barrier in accessing professional development in research	5.292	6.194	.000

2. Lack of Awareness on conferences and publication opportunities as barrier in accessing professional development in research	16.515	38.798	.000
3. Lack of Confidence on engaging in research as barrier in accessing professional development in research	3.219	3.478	.000

Sexuality

Table 6 suggests that sexuality cannot be used as an indicator of whether an educator perceives a lack of awareness and lack of confidence as barriers to maximizing their research engagement, particularly in participating in conferences and publishing their work in journals. Data reveal no significant difference in educators' perceptions of these factors when grouped by sexuality. However, a significant difference is observed in their perception of financial difficulty, with female educators viewing it as a greater challenge compared to males. This suggests that female educators may have fewer financial resources to support their research engagements or may be less aware of conferences with free presentation opportunities and journals that offer free publication.

Table 6.

Significant difference in the perception towards financial difficulty, lack of awareness, and lack of confidence as barriers in research conference presentation and research publication when grouped according to sexuality

Variables	t	df	Significance
1. Financial Difficulty as barrier in accessing professional development in research	3.245	297.953	.001
2. Lack of Awareness on conferences and publication opportunities as barrier in	-.066	271.947	.947

accessing professional development in research

3. Lack of Confidence on engaging in research as barrier in accessing professional development in research	1.207	297.604	.228
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Educational attainment

Table 7 reveals a significant difference in how educators perceive financial barriers to research activities based on their highest educational attainment. Specifically, those whose highest educational attainment is a bachelor’s degree consider financial difficulties to be a more significant obstacle to research engagement than those with master’s or doctorate degrees. Conversely, educators with a doctorate degree view financial difficulties as the least problem, which could be attributed to their perceived financial stability compared to the other groups. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference in educators’ perceptions of lack of awareness and lack of confidence as barriers to engaging in professional development opportunities in research when grouped by educational attainment.

Table 7.

Significant difference in the perception towards financial difficulty, lack of awareness, and lack of confidence as barriers in research conference presentation and research publication when grouped according to highest educational attainment

Variables	Mean Square	F	Significance
1. Financial Difficulty as barrier in accessing professional development in research	2.175	4.757	.009
2. Lack of Awareness on conferences and publication opportunities as barrier in accessing professional development in research	1.763	4.254	.015

3. Lack of Confidence on engaging in research as barrier in accessing professional development in research	.598	.812	.445
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Other factors that hinder educators from being research-productive

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that limited participation in conferences and publication in journals are also due to time constraints caused by heavy workloads and personal responsibilities at home, as expressed by educators during the interview. This is supported by Sabharwal et al. (2020), who explained that female educators' care responsibilities and family restrictions limit their research engagement.

Aydin et al. (2022) also identified family responsibilities as a significant social barrier to educators' research publication, as it makes time management significantly difficult. Meanwhile, Duracinsky et al. (2017) determined that the lack of time to write research due to overwhelming workloads prevents educators from increasing their publications. Additionally, the interview revealed that some educators are not motivated to present at research conferences or make an effort to publish their work due to the lack of recognition given by Higher Education Institutions for such achievements, which undermines the value of their contributions to their institution's success.

Another identified barrier to maximizing the research publication of Filipino educators in journals is the systematic bias of HEIs towards journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, which are known to be the most popular indexing databases.

Figure 1.

Other factors that serve as barriers to research conference presentation

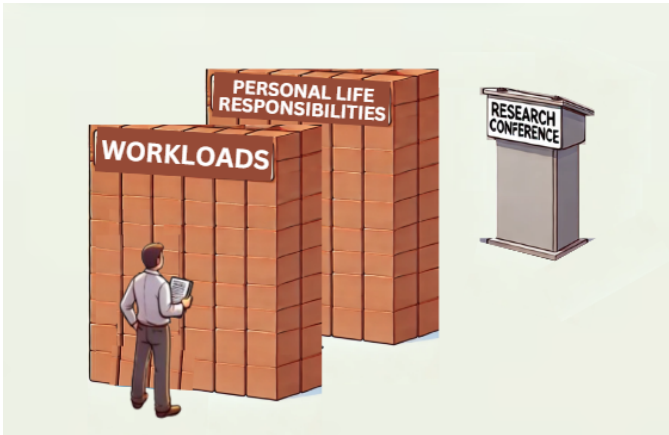


Figure 2.

Other factors that serve as barriers to research publication



Bias in favor of WoS and Scopus indexed journals

A number of educators have expressed that their HEIs require them to publish their work only in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) journals. In fact, some Filipino educators have

already been influenced by this bias, leading to misconceptions, such as the belief that ‘refereed’ journals are distinct from Scopus-indexed journals (Rogayan & Verga, 2022). However, what some may call ‘refereed’ journals are, in fact, reputable publications defined as peer-reviewed and indexed in various databases, including Scopus, making them essentially similar or at least falling under the same category. Additionally, this bias has led HEIs to become overly fixated on Scopus-indexed journals, unintentionally causing confusion on the legitimacy of others.

It is also critical to understand that, although there are exceptions, journals indexed in these top databases typically have a stricter review process, longer submission-to-publication timeframes, tighter competition, and higher publication fees. This bias in favor of such journals reflects insensitivity toward the financial capabilities of researchers and disadvantages authors whose studies may not be as comprehensive, potentially failing to meet the stringent requirements of highly reputable journals. Additionally, contrary to this bias, educators are often given the option to publish their work in research journals managed and published by the higher education institutions (HEIs) to which they are affiliated. However, these journals are typically not indexed in Scopus or Web of Science (WOS), are of lower quality, and are considered less reputable than other international journals, including those not indexed in the said databases but where educators are still restricted from publishing. The question arises: why are HEIs biased against journals not indexed in Scopus and WoS, yet display a positive attitude toward their own journals, which, like many others, are also not indexed in these databases?

This bias in favor of certain indexing databases, particularly Scopus, sends a problematic message to educators and researchers in the Philippines. It implies that other journals are illegitimate simply because they are not recognized by the

institution, or that their editorial and review processes are sub-standard. If either assumption holds, then HEIs are also suggesting that their own journals, including those established by other universities and colleges in the Philippines but not indexed in Scopus, should not be recognized. This contradiction discourages educators and researchers from choosing local university and college journals as venues for their research. However, if no one publishes in these journals, how can they gain traction and eventually qualify for Scopus indexing? Furthermore, this situation creates an unnecessary exclusion of other reputable journals, particularly those outside the jurisdiction of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines. Many international journals do not require such accreditation to be considered legitimate and reputable, yet Filipino researchers are often discouraged or even prohibited from submitting to them. This bias, therefore, not only limits the publishing opportunities for educators but also hinders the broader dissemination of Filipino research on a global scale.

Main sources relied on by Filipino educators to obtain information on research engagement opportunities

Most educators learn about conference presentation opportunities and journal publication through social media, their HEIs' research offices, and professional organizations they are affiliated with. However, since many educators express that presenting at conferences and publishing in journals are expensive, this suggests that they are primarily informed about paid opportunities rather than free-to-access ones. This could indicate that the conferences and journals they encounter are those that invest in aggressive social media marketing, including paid promotions, to maximize their visibility. Moreover, the assumption that HEIs and professional organizations in the Philippines predominantly highlight paid conferences and

journals raises concerns about the commodification of research in the country. This situation may indicate that these institutions either prioritize revenue-generating opportunities or lack awareness of fully funded conferences and no-cost publishing options. However, if research offices and professional organizations fail to promote cost-free research dissemination options, educators would be left with the impression that financial constraints are an unavoidable barrier to research engagement. Consequently, this reinforces the exclusion of financially struggling educators from the global research community and limits the accessibility of research dissemination opportunities for many Filipino scholars.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights the constraints that Filipino educators face in participating in research conferences and maximizing their research publication accomplishments. The findings suggest that limitations in research engagement are shaped by the policies and practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and professional organizations than by educators' capacity and interest. Additionally, social media plays a significant role, as it is a primary platform for advertising research opportunities. However, the prominence of paid conferences and journals in these advertisements suggests a potential bias toward commodified research engagement, further reinforcing financial barriers for educators.

The surveyed educators identified financial challenges as a major barrier to research engagement, particularly the high costs associated with participating in conferences and publishing in journals. Sadly, this financial burden appears to be reinforced by HEIs and professional organizations, which predominantly promote paid research opportunities. As a result, many educators develop the perception that financial

resources are a prerequisite for research engagement, remaining unaware of the existence of free-to-present conferences and fully funded journals. This aligns with previous studies identifying financial constraints as a hindrance to research participation. However, the findings of the current study suggest that the real issue may be a lack of awareness about free professional development opportunities rather than financial limitations alone. This underscores the urgent need to promote greater awareness of accessible, cost-free research opportunities. HEIs and professional organizations play a crucial role in this effort, yet their current focus on paid engagements suggests either a commodification of research in the Philippines or a lack of knowledge about free alternatives. To foster wider participation in research activities, these institutions must diversify their promotions to include more accessible options, ensuring that financial constraints do not become an unnecessary barrier to academic and professional growth.

The findings reveal that Filipino educators hold a positive perception of the significance of research engagement for both their careers and society. Despite facing various barriers, they remain confident in the quality of their research and their ability to present at conferences and publish in journals. This contradicts previous studies that suggest anxiety and lack of confidence as major obstacles to research participation among educators. However, time constraints due to heavy workloads and personal responsibilities at home continue to hinder research engagement. It is particularly ironic that HEIs, which push faculty members to be productive in research, also impose demanding workloads that leave little time for scholarly activities. Additionally, interviews with educators highlighted a lack of motivation stemming from the absence of institutional recognition for their research achievements. This undervaluation of their contributions weakens their enthusiasm for participating in research-related activities. Another critical

barrier is the strong preference of HEIs for Scopus and Web of Science indexed journals, which inadvertently discourages faculty members from engaging in research. This bias not only limits the avenues for publication but also contributes to low research productivity within the institutions themselves. Addressing these systemic issues; workload constraints, lack of institutional support, and restrictive publication preferences, will be crucial in fostering a more inclusive and dynamic research culture among Filipino educators.

CONCLUSIONS

The novelty of these findings underscores the need for further investigation and potential advocacy for more inclusive and diverse publication opportunities in the Philippines. This research serves as a wake-up call for education managers to develop innovative strategies that enhance research engagement and productivity, especially among educators who lack motivation or have limited appreciation for research. Additionally, the study challenges prevailing practices in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the policies set by government offices and accrediting agencies that supervise and evaluate these institutions. The findings have significant implications for fostering a genuine research culture within Philippine HEIs and the broader Philippine education system. If the identified barriers, such as restrictive publication preferences, lack of institutional recognition, and heavy faculty workloads are not addressed, many HEIs in the country may continue to struggle with research productivity. This could lead to difficulties in meeting accreditation requirements and achieving institutional excellence. However, the impact of these findings depends on the acceptance and application by key stakeholders, including educational policymakers, HEI administrators, and accrediting bodies. Nevertheless, this study marks an

important step toward initiating dialogue and action to improve the research landscape in the Philippines and elevate the overall quality of education in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, increasing financial support for educators in conducting research is highly recommended. HEIs and the government should provide funding to enable faculty members to produce high-quality research with significant contributions to their field and society. However, financial support for conference presentations and research publication is deemed unnecessary given the abundance of free conferences and fully funded research journals. Instead, efforts should focus on ensuring that educators are well-informed about these opportunities. This highlights the need for HEIs, particularly research directors and deans, to be knowledgeable about such options, which is a responsibility that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) could take. Additionally, HEIs may still provide financial support for other expenses, such as accommodation and travel costs for in-person conferences.

If financial constraints remain an issue, this study suggests that CHED and other relevant government institutions consider reallocating research budgets in HEIs. Currently, HEIs provide funding for faculty members to apply for sponsorships to present at conferences and publish their research. However, due to budget limitations and high conference fees, not all faculty members receive funding. A more effective approach would be for CHED to centralize and allocate this budget to support organizations and HEIs in organizing Regional, National, and International Research Conferences. This strategy would maximize participation, as faculty members would no longer need grants to attend conferences, which, in turn, eliminates costly presentation fees as a primary barrier to research

productivity. It would also help change the prevailing misconception that presenting at conferences requires a large budget, ultimately encouraging more educators to engage in research activities.

HEIs are also advised to encourage and support educators' research engagement by recognizing their contributions. Acknowledging the significance of research engagement and educators' efforts in this domain is crucial, as the lack of recognition discourages faculty members from conducting research. This not only limits their professional growth but also negatively impacts the institution's research reputation. To address these challenges, HEIs should provide a more flexible workload and foster a supportive research environment. Through the initiative of Deans and Research Directors, a policy granting educators flexibility in their workload to engage in research activities is recommended. Additionally, HEIs should offer research support in the form of mentorship and training programs to motivate educators to actively participate in research.

The findings of this study also highlight that Filipino educators have limited knowledge of research engagement opportunities, emphasizing the need for research collaboration. Educators should seek to collaborate with colleagues from other institutions rather than limiting themselves to working only with co-workers. A noticeable trend in Philippine research is that many studies are conducted by authors from the same institution. While this practice is acceptable, it restricts learning and exposure, as researchers primarily interact with the same group of individuals. Hence, expanding collaboration networks allows researchers to gain new perspectives, acquire fresh insights, and deepen their understanding of research engagement opportunities.

There is also an urgent need to address the systematic bias in favor of journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus.

HEIs should not limit educators to publishing only in these indexed journals but should recognize and value research publications in other refereed journals. However, to maintain research integrity and avoid predatory publications, it is crucial to develop educators' knowledge of ethical journal evaluation practices. Tools such as Prof. Jeffrey Beall's Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers and the Journal Evaluation Tool by Rele et al. (2017) should be used to ensure that research publications remain credible and that cases of predatory publishing are avoided.

Lastly, the review of related studies revealed that while numerous studies have examined barriers to research productivity across different countries, there is a notable lack of comparative research. Specifically, studies that compare research productivity and its barriers between educators from public and private higher education institutions are scarce. A comparative approach could provide deeper insights into how institutional structures, funding mechanisms, and administrative policies impact faculty research engagement differently in these two settings. Additionally, there is a gap in studies comparing higher education institutions based on their years of operation. Understanding whether long-standing universities encounter different research barriers than younger or newly established institutions could offer valuable perspectives on institutional maturity, research culture, and resource allocation. Hence, future researchers are encouraged to explore these gaps, as such studies could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing research engagement in diverse institutional contexts.

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It is also important to clarify that this research aims to contribute to the positive development of the research landscape by examining practices related to research presentation and publication. The study does not intend to defame any individuals, institutions, or organizations. Instead, the author's primary objective is to provide insights through a scientific approach, with the ultimate goal of improving research practices and policies within the country. The research is conducted in good faith, with no intent to cause harm, but rather to promote meaningful discussions and reforms that will enhance the research culture in the Philippines. Most importantly, this piece of work is wholeheartedly dedicated to Dr. Ricardo Apolinario Wagan - the first university president of Laguna State

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HARMONY IN HEARTS: UNRAVELING THE BONDS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PEER BELONGINGNESS IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

People's interactions with their environment in life are greatly influenced by their emotions. The success of the social environment is influenced by each individual's capacity to understand their own feelings, as well as those of others, and to control their behavior in accordance. This study aims to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among undergraduate students. Grounded in Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory, the study employs a quantitative research design with a correlational methodology. A sample of 130 undergraduate students (69 female, 61 male) was selected using random sampling, ensuring representation across gender, locality, and academic streams. Data were collected using the Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte et al., 2009) and the Peer Belongingness Scale (Sameer & Neetha, 2021). The findings of this study elucidate that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students. The female students showed a stronger positive correlation than the male undergraduate students. Locality-wise analysis revealed that rural students had a stronger relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness

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than urban students. It shows that students from rural localities are better at regulating their emotions and are more engaged in developing their interpersonal relationships. Lastly, streamwise analysis revealed that non-science students had a stronger relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness than science students. The study provides educational implications, advocating for interventions that enhance Emotional Intelligence to improve students' sense of belonging in academic institutions.

Keywords

Emotional intelligence, peer belongingness, prosocial behavior, undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

The concepts of emotion and intelligence are combined in order to form what is known as emotional intelligence (EQ). In the course of their lives, people's feelings play a significant role in the relationship they have with the world around them. Being conscious of one's own feelings as well as being able to identify the feelings of other people and guide their behavior accordingly, has a significant impact on the quality of the interactions that take place in social settings. In order for any of these things to take place, a person must first be able to put himself ahead of other people's needs and wants.

Emotional intelligence refers to a person's capacity to understand not just their own feelings but also those of other people, as well as to respond appropriately to the emotions of both themselves and those around them. As humans, we are always evolving, which is why our emotional intelligence is something that can never stop growing. The capacity for emotional intelligence, often known as EQ, is one that must be cultivated.

Mayer and Salovey (1990) defined the term Emotional Intelligence (EQ) as the capacity to recognize, access, and

produce emotions in order to support and comprehend emotions and their underlying meanings.

Goleman (1998) explains: “the ability to understand one’s own and other people’s emotions in order to motivate and manage emotions in our own lives and in our relationships is known as emotional intelligence. If emotions are handled well in a work environment, it can promote loyalty, trust, and commitment”.

Components of emotional intelligence

1. Self-awareness - having a realistic understanding of one’s strengths and flaws as well as awareness of one’s emotions and their significance. It also includes having self-confidence.

2. Managing emotions - emotional regulation, being truthful and reliable, and exhibiting flexibility and commitment that are appropriate to the situation.

3. Motivation - regulating one’s emotions to direct them toward a purpose.

4. Empathy - the ability to comprehend another person’s emotional viewpoint.

5. Handling relationships - use one’s own and other people’s personal information to manage social interactions and improve interpersonal skills.

Peer belongingness

Humans are social animals and cannot exist alone. No man is an island, as Aristotle correctly observed. In order to live a healthy life, people must have their needs met. Being social creatures, humans must also meet psychological requirements in addition to their physiological needs. The desire for belonging is one of these. Being associated with others is a basic need that involves a hierarchy of needs,

including those for safety, respect, self-actualization, and aesthetics. These needs combine to form the basis of the human drive. A person who misses their partner, friend or other important people in their life may wish to be a part of a family or group in order to fill the void left by these relationships. If a person's need to belong is not satisfied, they may suffer the pain of alienation, rejection, exclusion, the loss of friendship, and the sensation of being uprooted. A common threat might be present when this need arises. It's essential to satiate the need to belong in order to live and thrive. Here, we attempt to grasp the importance of belonging to one's peer group during the development of adolescence.

Peer belongingness is described in terms of the group members' feelings (i.e., like versus disliking) towards the child and the extent to which these feelings become consensual. It pertains to children's connections with peers (e.g., classmates) and is important for children to feel a sense of belonging (Ladd et al., 1997). It takes a lot of time and effort to be a part of a peer group, and friends frequently have more of an impact on a student's life than family. The two ideas of peer and belongingness are combined to form peer belongingness.

Defining belongingness

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the desire to belong is so intrinsic to human nature that missing out on it has serious implications. Lack of sense of belonging would not have such severe effects on us if it were not so essential. The drive to belong is so pervasive that it permeates all civilizations and sorts of individuals.

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the degree to which an individual feels included, respected, accepted, and

supported by others in a variety of social circumstances is one of the characteristics that has been cited as constituting a sense of belonging in the research.

Defining peer

Children and adolescents who are roughly the same age or who have reached a similar level of development are considered to be peers. A group of people of equal rank is referred to as a peer group, and often, members of a peer group are children of the same age as one another. This is the first opportunity a youngster has to interact with others on an equal level. According to Seltzer (2006), the teenage peer group originates as a deliberate association of people who are in the same developmental stage as them and are looking for self-definition, integration, and prescription. These individuals go through the same physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, and they are in the same developmental stage. As a child goes about their everyday activities and interacts with their peer group, they learn how to behave towards others outside of their home. They gain knowledge of cooperation, leadership, social roles, and teamwork. They gain the ability to respect others and to comprehend, evaluate, and appreciate their views and feelings. Additionally, the peer group offers a safe foundation for stepping away from the supervision and protection of the family and toward greater independence. The group's participants provide a source of moral support and inspiration for one another.

According to Brown and Larson (2009), a peer group is a collection of people who are on equal footing with one another. Peer groups gain respect, social position, and power in the eyes of other teenagers by living similar lifestyles. As a result, young adolescents with the strongest

social skills are more likely to be a part of a peer group that is well-regarded by peers their own age. Early adolescents' conduct can be influenced by their desire to fit in with a group of friends even before they join; they adopt their classmates' behaviors in order to fit in. Both the desire to be liked by others and the positive reputation that results from it help to moderate their interactions.

According to Brown and Larson (2009), teenagers are capable of having both a beneficial and a bad influence on one another. The interaction between the processes of selection (looking for "someone like me") and socialization is what determines this (inter influence).

Young adolescents who are having personal problems gather with others who are going through the same thing on one side (Catalano et al., 2004). Sieving et al. (2000) claim that, because younger teens are seen by their peers as more "with it," they are more vulnerable to the influence of the "in group" on them to engage in dangerous behaviors.

Adolescents are vulnerable to peer pressure, but this susceptibility varies from group to group and person to person. Teenagers locate their identities more in their peer groups than in their families. In order to get its members to follow the group's rules and priorities, the peer group exerts influence and control over them. Peer groups are essential in forming a person's attitudes, values, conduct, and personality and can have either a positive or negative effect on the individual. Parents are extremely important in assisting their children in selecting their classmates. A sense of belonging, which is linked to improved academic success, positive behaviors, and beneficial social outcomes, is more likely to be felt by students who have active social

relationships with other kids and adults, such as teachers (Ellis et al., 1998; Kunc, 1992).

METHODOLOGY

Significance of the study

People's interactions with their environment in life are greatly influenced by their emotions. The success of the social environment is influenced by each individual's capacity to understand their own feelings, as well as those of others, and to control their behavior in accordance. For this, a person must be able to see himself as a priority in order to enable all these things to occur. This introduces the idea of emotional intelligence. Better social functioning is linked to the many dimensions of emotional intelligence. To put it another way, those who are better at identifying and managing their own emotions appear to be more able to establish and sustain strong social ties with their parents and peers. College students who feel a sense of belonging, a crucial component of social functioning, experience less anxiety, melancholy, loneliness, and social anxiety. While a lack of social ties with their surroundings may be a contributing factor, these emotions are lessened when students have a sense of belonging.

The connection between emotional intelligence and belongingness among college students is not entirely understood, despite evidence pointing to a link between emotional intelligence and better-quality social interactions with peers. To the knowledge of the researchers, some studies have been done to date in developed countries that have examined the relation of emotional intelligence with other variables, including relational engagement, cognitive outcomes, mental health, and cooperative inclinations, but

none of the direct studies has been found with relation to peer belongingness (Güler, 2022; Moeller et al., 2020; Petrides, 2001). However, some of the studies have been done with variables like peer interactions, prosocial behavior, and social competence (Anike et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). In emerging nations like India, to the best of the knowledge of the researchers, no direct studies have been found with regard to emotional intelligence and peer belongingness. Although some studies have been conducted on emotional intelligence with other variables like social skills, cooperative tendencies, and social value orientation (Iqbal et al., 2021; Kumar, 2020).

The studies were carried out, according to a review of related literature, in both a national and international context. In the International context, the majority of the previous studies were carried out using emotional intelligence in relation to mental health, social competence, and relational engagement (Iqbal et al. 2021; Moeller et al., 2020; Shafait et al., 2021), but none of the direct studies has been found with relation to peer belongingness. Nevertheless, some research has been done using variables social skills, prosocial behavior and peer relationships (Anike et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Research gap

In the Indian context, very few studies have been found related to emotional intelligence and peer belongingness (Iqbal et al., 2021; Kumar, 2020; Malekar & Mohanty, 2009). Despite studies suggesting the link of emotional intelligence to better quality relationships with peers, it is still not completely understood how it relates to emotional intelligence and belongingness in college students. The researchers experienced a gap in the research and the need for

additional studies to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the Indian scenario. So, the researchers chose these variables and conducted a study specifically focusing on undergraduate students belonging to different localities and coming from different choices of streams. The findings will contribute to both theoretical and practical knowledge, helping institutions foster emotionally supportive environments that enhance students' social well-being and academic success.

Research problem

In higher education, students' ability to form meaningful peer relationships significantly impacts their emotional well-being, academic engagement, and overall development. Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a vital role in shaping these interactions by helping individuals recognize, understand, and regulate emotions effectively. While existing literature has extensively explored EI in relation to mental health, academic success, and interpersonal skills, limited studies have focused on its direct relationship with Peer Belongingness (PB), particularly in the Indian context. The lack of research on how EI influences students' sense of inclusion within their peer groups highlights a critical gap in understanding the social dynamics of higher education. Without a clear comprehension of this relationship, educators and policymakers may struggle to implement strategies that enhance students' social and emotional well-being.

Purpose of the study

This study aims to investigate the relationship between Emotional intelligence and Peer belongingness among undergraduate students. It seeks to determine whether students with higher EI experience stronger peer connections

and how factors such as gender, locality, and academic stream influence this relationship.

The researchers formulated the following questions to give the thrust to their research:

1. Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students?
2. Is there a gender difference in the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness?
3. Whether a relationship exists between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in undergraduate students belonging to different streams?
4. Whether a relationship exists between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in students of different locality?

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students.
2. To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the sub-sample based on gender of undergraduate students.
3. To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the sub-sample based on locality of undergraduate students.
4. To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the sub-sample based on stream of undergraduate students.

Sample

The sample consists of 130 undergraduate students (69 female and 61 male students) of Aligarh Muslim University. The sample was selected through a random sampling technique giving due representation to sub samples gender, locality and stream.

Tools

The study is based on two scales: The Assessing Emotions Scale (Schutte et al., 1998) and Peer Belongingness Scale (Babu & Neetha, 2021) with the established reliability and validity.

The Assessing Emotion Scale consists of 33 items under four factors, including the perception of emotion, managing own emotions, managing other emotions, utilization of emotions.

In order to prove the internal consistency of AES, the investigators used Cronbach Alpha Test. Many other investigations have proven the 33 item's internal consistency scale. As determined by Cronbach's alpha displays the internal consistency for various sample sizes. Over all samples, the mean alpha is .87, which signifies a high degree of internal consistency among the items. Thus, the scale is internally consistent. The Assessing Emotions Scale is a five-point Likert scale consisting of 33-item focusing on typical emotional intelligence under four factors.

Peer Belongingness Scale: This scale was developed by Babu & Neetha (2021), and it has six components. Peer Belongingness refers to the relationships that children have with members of their peer group (such as their classmates), and it is characterized in terms of the sentiments (such as liking or disliking) that group members have toward the kid, as well as the degree to which these sentiments become

consensual. The following conceptual definitions of the peer belongingness sub-dimensions are slightly redefined- Connectedness, Inclusion in the group, Use of friends, Emotions and Dynamic nature of friendship.

RESULTS

The null hypotheses were framed according to the aforementioned objectives.

Hypothesis 1

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students.

Table 1 displays the correlation matrix that shows the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students. The result showed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among undergraduate students, $r(128) = .514, p = .000$. This denotes that changes in emotional intelligence are associated with the same changes in peer belongingness. It can be interpreted that an increase in emotional intelligence leads to a corresponding increase in peer belongingness. Thus, the null hypothesis that ‘there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students’ is **rejected**.

Hypothesis 2

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the female sub-sample of undergraduate students.

Table 2 highlights the correlation matrix that shows the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the female sub-sample of

undergraduate students. The findings revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among female students, $r(67) = .626, p = .000$. It shows that the higher the emotional intelligence of female undergraduate students, the higher will be their peer belongingness. Thus, the null hypothesis that “there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the female sub-sample of undergraduate students” is **rejected**.

Hypothesis 3

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the male sub-sample of undergraduate students.

Table 3 indicates the correlation matrix that shows the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the male sub-sample of undergraduate students. The result revealed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among male students, $r(59) = .417, p = .001$. It can be inferred that with the increase in the emotional intelligence of male undergraduate students, their peer belongingness will also increase. Thus, the null hypothesis that ‘there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the male sub-sample of undergraduate students’ is **rejected**.

Hypothesis 4

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the rural sub-sample of undergraduate students.

Data tabulated in Table 4 shows the correlation matrix, which indicates the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the rural sub-sample of undergraduate students. The result showed

that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among students belonging to the rural locality, $r(35) = .682, p = .000$. It can be assumed that the increase in the emotional intelligence of undergraduate students belonging to rural locality is likely to be accompanied by an increase in their sense of belonging. Thus, the null hypothesis that ‘there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the rural sub-sample of undergraduate students’ is **rejected**.

Hypothesis 5

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the urban sub-sample of undergraduate students.

Table 5 displays the correlation matrix that shows the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the urban sub-sample of undergraduate students. The result showed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among urban students, $r(91) = .454, p = .000$. It denotes that any change, whether increase or decrease in emotional intelligence, is liable to cause similar changes in peer belongingness of undergraduate students belonging to an urban locality. Hence, the null hypothesis that ‘there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the urban sub-sample of undergraduate students’ is **rejected**.

Hypothesis 6

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the non-science sub-sample of undergraduate students.

Table 6 highlights the correlation matrix that shows the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer

belongingness in the non-science sub-sample of undergraduate students. The result showed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among non-science undergraduate students, $r(64) = .614, p = .000$. It can be assumed that an increase in an undergraduate student's sense of belonging will go hand in hand with an increase in their emotional intelligence if they are from the non-science stream. Hence, the null hypothesis that 'there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the non-science sub-sample of undergraduate students' is **rejected**.

Hypothesis 7

There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the science sub-sample of undergraduate students.

Table 7 indicates the correlation matrix that shows the strength of relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the science sub-sample of undergraduate students. The result showed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among science stream undergraduate students, $r(62) = .429, p = .000$. It can be inferred that the rise in emotional intelligence among undergraduate students from science streams likely to be accompanied by a rise in their sense of belonging. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the science sub-sample of undergraduate students is **rejected**.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness among undergraduate students. In addition, it also

intended to comprehensively investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer Belongingness in the sub-samples of undergraduate students based on their gender, stream and locality. The result showed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness in the total sample of undergraduate students. It is also clear from the result that the students showing high emotional intelligence are also having high peer belongingness. Peer relationships are significantly influenced by emotion. Successful peer relationships are correlated with the capacity to control emotions. Individuals who are depressed and emotionally hostile are more likely to be rejected by their peers, whereas those who are happy and optimistic are more well-liked. In the study of Karaman and Tarim (2018), the findings stated that the students would be happier if they felt like they belonged at the university. University students' expectations, teacher support, and sense of community appear to be connected to their feelings of belonging to the university

Zhoc et al. (2018) showed that students with high emotional intelligence are more involved in their learning because of the relationships they make with their teachers and peers. Similarly, Olivier et al. (2019) found that emotional Intelligence positively influences relational engagement, a significant relationship was found between the two among the undergraduates. Fredricks et al. (2004) referred to the idea of relational engagement with peers, teachers, and the school as an emotional engagement. As social inclusion, social integration, social belonging, and social involvement are all characteristics of relational engagement, which is also related to one of the sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely social skills.

Ciarrochi et al. (2001) have shown that higher emotional intelligence scores are linked to more social acceptance and fewer rejection experiences. These findings support the idea that having a higher emotional intelligence in multiple areas leads to better social functioning. To put it another way, people who are more adept at recognizing and controlling their own emotions seem to be better able to create and maintain wholesome social bonds with parents and other adults. Jaworowska and Matczak (2001) indicated that the ability to function in social situations improves with higher emotional intelligence levels.

Levine et al. (1997) stated that people who are emotionally dependent cooperate more frequently than people who are rationally dependent. Sun et al. (2015) indicated that good peer relationships could help people develop positive character traits and interpersonal trust as a beneficial condition of social support. As a result, peers who trust one another tend to cooperate more than peers who haven't developed that level of trust. This implies that college students should completely trust their peers when collaborating in order to effectively achieve shared objectives. As the peer group provides a supportive environment for identity development. A climate for growth and self-knowledge that the family is ill-equipped to give and that very few others can provide them, including adolescent friendships. This is the distinctive advantage of friendship among adolescents.

Another finding of the study revealed the strength of the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness according to gender sub-sample. The female showed a stronger positive correlation than the male undergraduate students. It can be seen that females are better at building interpersonal relationships because they exhibit more nurturing behavior, an empathic mindset, and a

caring personality, the possible reason behind it the innate ability of parental care nature among females in comparison to males. Even though men are more adaptable, optimistic, and self-assured. In comparison to girls, boys' friendships tend to be more active and less personal. So, it can be said that boys are less susceptible to emotional trauma and can manage stress more effectively than women.

As per the proposed ability model and mixed model of emotional intelligence illustrated that people with high emotional intelligence (EI) are able to recognize and express their emotions clearly, comprehend the feelings of others, and build and maintain mutually satisfying and responsible interpersonal relationships. They can also increase their social support while creating a reliable connection to the outside world. In the previous research (Brown et al., 1986; Brown & Lohr, 1987), it was found that adolescent girls place more significance on belonging to a group than boys and are more strongly bonded to their peer groups than boys.

Similarly, the study of various other researches (Cairns et al., 1995; Galambos, 2004) revealed that female adolescents have more friends than male adolescents do, and those female adolescents also exhibit higher levels of empathy, self-disclosure, and lower levels of overt hostility in their friendships. They also expect and demand more caring behavior from their friends. Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus (1994), Rose and Meyer (2007) illustrated that girls are more likely than boys to engage in ruminative coping, which is dwelling on unpleasant circumstances and the negative emotions connected to issues and that they participate in greater co-rumination, which makes them more susceptible to their companions' suffering. Even though males

may not gain as much as girls from the sense of belonging that is a product of deep, lasting friendships, boys are less sensitive to the emotional agony that is likely to accompany high levels of disclosure and co-rumination.

Boys and girls may have different ways of speaking about or describing their friends, which can hide the significance of how much a sense of association affects a person's mental health. However, it implies that establishing a sense of peer group integration shows a range of healthy coping abilities, such as problem-solving, effective communication, and emotional control (Beam et al., 2002; Farrington, 2004; Graber, 2004). Contrary to these findings, Ribera et al. (2015) revealed that gender and age had not found their role in peer belonging and institutional acceptance.

Locality-wise analysis revealed that rural students had a stronger relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness than urban students. It shows that the students belonging to a rural locality are better at regulating their emotions and are more engaged in developing their interpersonal relationships. It is a common observation that rural people have better social skills, more empathetic and caring behavior towards others, and also sustain healthy, responsible, and mutually satisfying relationships with one another than urban people. The possible reason for this may be that rural people have more time compared to urban and they spend it with their peers, family and relatives that, which fosters their interpersonal relationships. The researchers also elucidate the findings in the context of the university residential hostels, where it is generally observed that the residential students belonging to rural localities are very attached to their peers of their same locality and show very cooperative attitudes toward them, it may be the cultural impact of a rural community that influence their social

skills, which is one of the dimensions of the emotional intelligence and helps in managing peer relations while the individual belonging from urban locality having busy life schedule that restricts their relational engagement including social participation, inclusion, and integration, which is one of the aspects of the emotional intelligence that implies to a feeling of attachment to others. This suggests that social functioning is improved when a person has a higher emotional intelligence

Contrary to the above findings, Mahato (2016) revealed that urban adults have higher levels of emotional intelligence as compared to adults from rural areas. The study of Ribera et al. (2015) highlighted that the students' perception of institutional acceptance was unaffected by their living conditions. After adjusting for student demographics, college experiences, and institutional features, individuals who lived on campus reported the same levels of institutional acceptance as those who resided off campus.

Lastly, streamwise analysis was done, and it was revealed that non-science students had a stronger relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness than science students. A study by Qayyum (2016) discovered a reduction in medical students' emotional intelligence in this area; he also noted the necessity for future doctors to acquire the skills necessary to manage their own emotions as well as those of their patients. Hence, the researchers suggest that the skill set which is essential for emotional intelligence is to be developed in science students, which will help them to establish prosocial behavior. Eisenberg's theory of prosocial behaviors states that people develop prosocial behavior through paying attention to others' needs, deciding to help others, and linking intention and behavior. The higher a person's EI, the more accurately they will be

able to gauge the emotions of those around them and the greater the likelihood that they will participate in PSB.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study sought to elucidate the relationship between emotional intelligence and peer belongingness. These findings suggest intervention efforts for the stakeholders, including college students, teachers, university or college administration and policymakers.

To start with teachers, they should place a focus on students' relational engagement and involve them in various intellectual activities (such as promoting discussion, asking students to explore their ideas, and helping students to form positive relationships with their peers). In addition, educators must determine which pupils are lacking in emotional intelligence (EI) and instruct these students on how to raise their EI by delving deeper into the various aspects that comprise it (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy etc.) one at a time. Furthermore, collaboration between teachers and students is important for building trust in educational institutions. As in academic institutions, trust is disappearing. This loss of faith makes educational institutions' services even poorer. Consequently, it is impossible for the administration, professors, and students to collaborate efficiently. Emotional support from teachers can improve students' trust in the institution, their sense of belonging there, their willingness to try new things and take risks, their motivation to learn, their ability to remember what they've learned, how satisfied they are with their studies, and their overall experience in class.

Secondly, students should take part in co-curricular activities and other pursuits since they enable them to bring out the best in their friends, view one another from new

perspectives, and enjoy common interests. These activities also play a crucial role in the development of their friendships. Through these activities, they have a sense of familiarity with college. In addition to co-curricular activities, involvement in learning communities and service-learning projects like participating in the students' union, eco-club, drama club, literary club, different committees of the department etc., in which having a formal student leadership position also made them feel more accepted by their peers and by their institutions. Also, participating in psychological seminars and workshops can help to increase the emotional intelligence and social competencies among students.

Thirdly, a university environment and its customs and traditions help students feel socially supported by their peers and other students, particularly significant for those who experience further marginalization at college as a result of their socioeconomic standing, gender, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity. Campus programs that encourage frequent and healthy contact between students must to be supported in order to continue functioning as effectively as possible. Lowering experiences of rejection should be a goal in addition to raising students' sense of belonging. Further, targeting and enhancing emotional intelligence would also be a possible strategy for prevention and intervention efforts associated with a sense of belongingness. They should organize engagement programs, including high-impact practices (HIPs) that have been shown to be beneficial in encouraging student learning, growth, and perseverance, therefore, institutions should establish programs including learning communities, service learning, undergraduate research, internships, capstone projects, and study abroad. Further, group guidance and individual counseling should be organized regularly in which the guide or counselor acts

actively and offers support while the young adolescent is going through a trying time. The youth look forward to spending time with the counselor, having enlightening conversations with him or her, and making every effort to obey the counsel given.

The administration also encourages student collaboration on research as peer interactions are crucial to the growth of college students since they are in the transitional stage between adulthood and entering society. College students will work more effectively in research collaboration if they respect and trust their collaborators more. So, the administration and organization of the research team should promote social support and not overlook peer relationships. All of these can increase interdependence and personal gain, which considerably encourages productive collaboration in scientific study. Further, workshops and training programs should be organized to address the issues with emotional intelligence and stress as students show more favorable perceptions of and relationships with teachers who have higher emotional intelligence. Last but not least, Punishment should be avoided in school as prosocial people receive punishment, and their level of cooperation declines as a result of a decline in interpersonal trust.

Lastly, policymakers and practitioners at higher education institutions (HEIs) should reevaluate, redesign, and establish new policies and procedures to help well-trained professionals improve HEIs' responsiveness to deal with the needs of demanding situations with resolve, emotional intelligence, and greater learning. In order to increase their capacity for learning, emotional intelligence teaches students to make sensible assessments of the situation, to have faith in their professors, and to be aware of the institution's principles and standards. It may be suggested to design

policies that address satisfying the needs of students for belonging in universities. In accordance with these principles, universities should, for instance, encourage the formation of student organizations by providing the chance for activities where students may feel the flow and by planning fun social events. Further, the emotional intelligence content should be a part of the curriculum because it will help children cope with the challenging circumstances of post COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

The study takes inspiration from ideas found in previous works as well as the theory of student involvement. Both researchers and practitioners in the field of education can benefit from the findings. The researchers emphasized the significance of paying attention to the students' connections with emotional intelligence and peer relations and found a positive relationship between them. Although there are a number of restrictions that need to be taken into account before generalizing the findings because of the small sample size this study opens the discussion about several ways the university community might cooperate to improve EI, as an individual with strong emotional intelligence can recognize their own emotions, express them effectively, comprehend others' emotions, and build and maintain mutually beneficial and responsible interpersonal connections with their peers and teachers in the university.

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APPENDICES

Table 1

Pearson correlation matrix in the total sample of undergraduate students

Correlations		EI Score	PB Score
		1	
EI Score	Pearson Correlation		.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	130	.000
	N		130
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.514**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

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

Table 2

Pearson correlation matrix in the female sub-sample of undergraduate students

		Correlations	
		EI Score	PB Score
EI Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	69	.000
	N		69
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.626**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	69	69

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

Table 3

Pearson correlation matrix in the male sub-sample of undergraduate students

		Correlations	
		EI Score	PB Score
EI Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	61	61
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.417**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	61	61

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

Table 4

Pearson correlation matrix in the rural sub-sample of undergraduate students

		Correlations	
		EI Score	PB Score
EI Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.682**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	37	37
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.682**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	37	37

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

Table 5

Pearson correlation matrix in the urban sub-sample of undergraduate students

		Correlations	
		EI Score	PB Score
EI Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.454**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	93	93
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.454**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	93	93

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

Table 6

Pearson correlation matrix in the non-science sub-sample of undergraduate students

		Correlations	
		EI Score	PB Score
EI Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.614**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	66	66
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.614**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	66	66

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

Table 7

Pearson correlation matrix in the science sub-sample of undergraduate students

		Correlations	
		EI Score	PB Score
EI Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.429**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	64	64
PB Score	Pearson Correlation	.429**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	64	64

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

ASSESSING POOR ATTENDANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN IN GENERAL STUDIES CLASSES FOR A CHANGE

Muhinat Bolanle Bello¹

Abstract

Student attendance in General Studies (GNS) classes at the University of Ilorin has significantly declined despite institutional efforts to improve participation through scheduling adjustments and blended learning options. This persistent low attendance raises concerns about the effectiveness of GNS courses, which are designed to provide students with foundational knowledge across disciplines. The problem is multifaceted, with administrative, infrastructural, student-related, and lecturer-related factors contributing to absenteeism. Despite the university's policy requiring 75% attendance for eligibility to write examinations, students frequently disregard GNS classes, potentially undermining their academic development and overall university experience. To investigate this issue, the study adopted a qualitative case study design, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the factors influencing poor attendance. Data were collected through an unstructured, two-item interview instrument administered via Google Forms to ensure respondents' anonymity and encourage honest responses. The study sampled undergraduates from ten faculties using a purposive sampling technique, selecting 24 participants through simple random sampling. Data were analyzed thematically using ATLAS.ti. The findings highlight the urgent need for institutional reforms, infrastructural improvements, and pedagogical innovations to enhance student engagement and attendance in GNS classes.

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Keywords

Attendance, undergraduate, qualitative, Nigeria, West Africa, case study

INTRODUCTION

In the educational setting, schools bear the fundamental responsibilities of creating an environment conducive to learning and providing effective knowledge to students. However, the achievement of these goals is intrinsically tied to the consistent presence of students in classrooms. The learners need to be available in the school to learn. In the context of the autonomy granted to higher education students, a noteworthy challenge persists in the form of poor attendance, particularly in General Studies (GNS) classes. Higher institution students have the freedom to attend class or not to some degree, yet a certain percentage of attendance is required to qualify for entering final examinations. All higher institutions have their peculiar policy on the attendance system that suits the situation of the school involved. In the Undergraduate Academic Program of the University of Ilorin, this percentage was 75% as of 2024. Despite the knowledge of this, poor undergraduate attendance is at a high level, especially in General Studies Classes.

Proper attendance of students encourages both the teacher and the student in every institution of learning, from the primary session to the higher institution. The availability of students encourages the teachers to teach effectively, and it will enable the students to learn all they are supposed to learn as a whole. Half knowledge of a subject matter is not enough to create a positive and expected learning outcome. In every institution of learning, adequate attendance is important for both the teacher and the student. Teaching cannot take place without the presence of

students; this is why adequate measures are put in place to better effective teaching and learning.

The challenges associated with poor attendance are not confined to a specific geographical location or course discipline. Ezeji's (2017) research underscores that poor attendance is a widespread issue across tertiary institutions. The advent of e-learning, as a potential solution, prompts questions about the effectiveness of different teaching modalities in addressing attendance concerns. The intricate web of factors influencing poor attendance in General Studies classes necessitates a thorough understanding of motivational, institutional, and personal aspects contributing to this phenomenon. Addressing these factors is essential for developing targeted interventions, allowing institutions like the University of Ilorin to enhance attendance rates and foster a more enriching and effective learning environment for their students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Attendance plays a pivotal role in establishing a dynamic and symbiotic relationship between teachers and students. Sekiwu et al. (2020) highlight that consistent attendance is a prerequisite for academic success, creating an environment where teachers can effectively impart knowledge, and students can actively engage with course content. Attending school regularly is essential to developing the abilities and knowledge needed for academic achievement (Reid, 2005). It makes it possible for each student to acquire new knowledge that will support the growth of the intended abilities and potential. But this cannot happen in the context of poor attendance.

School absenteeism or poor attendance is defined as a student's excused or unexcused absences from school (Reid,

2005). Students' absenteeism is commonly characterized as "intentional or frequent absence from the class without a justifiable explanation, excluding sickness or accidents", according to Teixeira (2013). Students' absence from class is defined as the period of time during which students do not attend classes (Teasley, 2004).

According to Teasley (2004) and Ruel et al. (2021), students' attitudes and passion for learning have a significant role in their absenteeism, with less motivated students missing more school than more motivated ones. According to Schwartz et al. (2009), absenteeism is negatively related to future-oriented academic goals. This indicates that students' lack of enthusiasm to attend class may have a more negative influence on their academic development. For pupils who consistently attend the class, it would be different. Because they pay attention to all of the courses and tests, kids who attend class regularly will advance academically. Students who have paid attention to all of the class lessons are well-prepared and knowledgeable for the test (Teixeira, 2013). However, the opposite is true when attendance is low. Class attendance and academic performance of second-year university students in organic chemistry courses were examined by researchers like Ayoko et al. (2023). The findings indicated a substantial positive correlation between exam scores and class attendance. Similarly, Sekiwu et al. (2020) investigated the connection between attendance and academic achievement in Uganda's universal primary education system. Even if, in this case, academic performance was not significantly impacted by the school attendance variable, one of the results indicated a favorable association between the two.

According to Balkis et al. (2016), low attendance disrupts the dynamic teaching-learning environment. Chronic

absenteeism puts the teaching-learning environment at risk by making the classroom a tedious and unpleasant place where students are irritable and uncomfortable when they attend. To put it another way, people who miss courses for any reason miss out on the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed academically and hence lose out on long-term advantages. According to Crede and Kieszczynka (2010), consistent attendance at school does not ensure academic success because many students may attend courses, but not participate in learning activities. Crede and Kieszczynka went on to suggest that to maximize academic value, both teachers and students should actively participate in class attendance. Therefore, to guarantee that students have a smooth teaching and learning experience, care must be taken to manage absenteeism at the tertiary education level. Numerous earlier studies show a wide range of absentee rates in higher education, which has worried instructors and school officials. Since absenteeism is a major factor in subpar academic performance, higher education institutions are becoming concerned about the drop in student attendance (Sekiwu et al., 2020).

Absence from lectures by students in higher education is becoming a more widespread issue that cuts across nations, institutions, and subject areas. This may be because of the new order of e-learning, where different platforms can be employed for effective teaching and learning. Additionally, it has drawn a large number of studies in which interested parties have attempted to explain the difficult trend by outlining the contributing variables in many academic settings and potential remedies for it through a variety of strategies (Egede & Bivwiere, 2021).

The reasons students struggle with attendance are varied. These include academic difficulty, financial struggles,

mental health issues, family responsibilities, and social pressures (Egede & Bivwiere, 2021). These challenges intersect to create barriers to attendance, prompting the need for institutions to provide targeted support to address these multifaceted issues and improve attendance rates.

Academic difficulty is a major factor in poor attendance among undergraduate students (Knoster, 2016). Students who are struggling with academics may feel overwhelmed or discouraged and therefore avoid attending classes. Additionally, students may feel as though their lack of understanding will be evident to their peers, and they may become embarrassed or ashamed (Penteado, 2024). Financial struggles are another factor that can lead to poor attendance in undergraduate students (Blad, 2023). College tuition and living costs can be expensive, and many students struggle to pay for their education. This may lead to students working long hours and finding it difficult to attend classes (Knoster, 2016).

Mental health issues are another factor that can influence the turnout of undergraduate students in General studies classes (Blad, 2023). Students who are struggling with depression or anxiety may find it difficult to motivate themselves to attend classes. Additionally, students may not be aware of the resources available to them on campus and may not seek help. Additionally, research has found that students who have poor attendance are more likely to be delinquent and have poorer mental health (Knoster, 2016). Good attendance is essential for academic success. To improve attendance, teachers and administrators should create a positive school environment that encourages students to be in class (Golann, 2015). This can include providing incentives for good attendance and reinforcing positive messages about the importance of attending school (Amalu

& Abang, 2016). Additionally, schools should provide resources and support to students who may need additional assistance to attend school regularly (Ayoko et al., 2023).

Poor attendance is paramount among university undergraduate students as they move from high school to post-secondary education, and university undergraduate students encounter several difficulties. While they may be prepared academically, the shift in expectations and demands can be difficult to adjust to (Tinto, 1993). Common issues include increased workloads, increased academic competition, and new social dynamics (Vanderkam, 2016). Students may also struggle with time management, stress, and feelings of isolation. University students can benefit from the support of peers, faculty, and university resources to assist students in acclimating to their new surroundings (Schwartz et al., 2009). However, all these have also affected their academic commitment to General Studies.

General studies are a broad subject area that encompasses a wide range of topics, from the natural sciences and technology to the humanities and social sciences. It is a field of study often seen as a stepping stone to further academic studies but can also be used as a foundation for specialized academic fields. General Studies is an important part of any educational system. It is the foundation for all other areas of study, providing students with the skills and knowledge to become informed and responsible citizens. It helps to create well-rounded individuals who can think critically and make informed decisions. General studies also help to equip students with the skills to communicate and work with others effectively. Recent research has shown that General Studies is particularly important for helping to develop student resilience and self-awareness. The National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise

[LEAP] (2007) said that “General education courses help students to understand their behaviours and the behaviour of others, to think critically and creatively, to understand the complexities of the world, and to develop the skills needed to effectively navigate the world” (p. 4). The report also found that General studies courses can help promote student engagement and help build a sense of purpose and civic engagement.

General Studies provide a strong foundation for students to improve their communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking abilities as they create well-rounded individuals who can effectively engage with the world around them. Overall, general studies continue to be an important field of study, as they provide a comprehensive view of the global context and investigate the impacts of globalization and other social issues on contemporary society.

Tinto’s Student Integration Theory (1975, 1993) explains student retention based on academic and social integration. In the context of this study, academic disengagement due to the perceived irrelevance of GNS courses, poor teaching methods, and infrastructural challenges reduces student motivation to attend classes. Similarly, social disconnection, influenced by peer influence, poor institutional communication, and financial constraints, further weakens attendance. To improve GNS class participation, the university must enhance course relevance, adopt interactive teaching strategies, improve learning environments, and strengthen institutional support. Addressing both academic and social integration will foster a culture of consistent attendance and meaningful engagement in GNS classes.

METHODOLOGY

Background of the research

In recent times, attendance at the General Studies Classes at the University of Ilorin has raised a source of concern in both physical and online classes; during physical classes, a lot of undergraduates in the locale university are usually outside the classroom while the lecturers are teaching. This has been a source of concern for the University, the timing was seen as a challenge, and thereby, it was changed from 8 am - 10 am to 12 pm-2 pm on the university timetable. After two academic sessions of teaching with the rescheduled timetable, the population of attendees kept reducing. This made the University implement blended teaching, meaning accommodating both physical and online classes.

In a scenario of 100 level GNS class of over 13,000 students, only 40 students attended class for week one, 101 for week two, and 63 for week three, while the highest attendance for that session was 210 students at the end of thirteen weeks of lecture in a virtual class. The same was the case of GNS for 200 Level with a student population of over 14,000 in virtual class; the attendance was very low. This was what prompted the researcher not to ask the lecturers but the students why they were not attending both the physical and online General Studies Classes and the factors that could be responsible for the poor Attendance of Undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in General Studies Classes.

Research gap

Despite extensive research on student absenteeism in higher education, limited studies have specifically examined attendance challenges in General Studies (GNS) courses, particularly in Nigerian universities. Existing literature

often focuses on course-specific attendance patterns rather than multi-disciplinary courses like GNS, which are compulsory but perceived as non-essential by students. Additionally, while prior studies address institutional and infrastructural barriers, they rarely explore student perceptions and motivations for non-attendance within the Nigerian context.

Furthermore, research on blended learning and attendance in large-scale GNS classes remains scarce, especially in West African institutions, where digital learning infrastructures are still evolving. This study fills these gaps by exploring the underlying reasons for poor GNS attendance from the students' perspective and proposing context-specific interventions to improve engagement.

Objectives

The study explores Factors contributing to the Low Attendance of Undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in General Studies Classes. Specifically, the study examines:

1. factors responsible for Poor Attendance in GNS Classes at the University of Ilorin as assessed by undergraduates;
2. possible solutions to factors responsible for poor attendance in GNS Classes at the University of Ilorin as assessed by Undergraduates.

Research questions

To direct this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What do undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin consider to be the main causes of their low attendance in GNS classes?

2. What are the probable solutions to causes related to poor attendance in GNS Classes as assessed by Undergraduate Students at the University of Ilorin?

Research design

The research adopted a qualitative approach of a case study design. Creswell and Creswell (2017) emphasize that qualitative research is particularly useful for gaining in-depth insights into complex phenomena. Assessing poor attendance is a multifaceted issue, and qualitative methods allow for a comprehensive exploration of the reasons behind it.

Data collection methods

An unstructured 2-item interview with psychometric qualities of content validity was the only instrument that was adopted to elicit the needed data for the study. It was presented to the respondents in a Google Form, the essence of Google Form is to allow the respondents to express themselves without fear of intimidation or cancelling information. This was in line with the opinion of Creswell (2012), who maintains that administering a research instrument through Google Forms gives respondents a good opportunity to express themselves freely behind the was used.

Participants and sampling procedure

The population used for this study were all undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin. Purposive sampling techniques were used to sample 10 faculties out of the 16 faculties in the university; Faculties of Education, Agriculture, Social Sciences, Basic Medical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Life sciences, Arts, Veterinary Medicines, Law and Communication and information sciences. A total of 24

undergraduates were sampled using a simple random sampling procedure in ratio 2:2:2:2:2:2:2;2;2:2;2 and 4 across the sampled faculties.

Data analysis

The ATLAS.ti statistical package was used to analyze the qualitative data with thematic coding. According to Creswell (2012), it is used to make the process of storing, sorting, coding, analyzing, and performing data representation easier.

Ethical considerations

The study reported the participants' perceptions using a pseudonym to preserve their privacy, following the recommendation of McCann and Clark (2003). Creswell (2012) points out that the researcher needs to be aware of how to maintain the anonymity of the people and the location where the data is being collected.

RESULTS

The results of this investigation were presented following the inquiries for the study using ATLAS.ti, data collected were coded through thematic coding.

Research Question One: What do undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin think are the main causes of their low attendance in GNS classes?

The first figure shows the analysis of the data in themes.

Figure 1 shows the responses on reasons for poor attendance in four main themes, which are; Administrative, infrastructural, students and lecturers, which means that these four are all factors responsible for why students' attendance to GNS classes is poor.

Each of these factors is responsible for students' poor attendance is not expanded and explained further.

Figure 2 revealed the students identified the factors that contributed to their poor attendance in GNS classes as, first, administrative reasons, which have to do with the lack of importance placed on class attendance by the school administration, so students don't show up for class since they felt the class is not important. Also, the public address system is not audible enough to reach all the students in the classroom, and the lack of proper planning of the team teaching by lecturers is another reason for poor attendance. Lack of communication on class cancellations to the students discourages most of them, leading to poor attendance.

Figure 3 shows that the second reason for poor attendance in GNS classes is infrastructural factors; first on the list is poor internet access, especially during online classes. The majority of the students find it very difficult to join the class because the network is poor, while those who joined can't make any meaning from the class because the network keeps fluctuating. It was also pointed out that the class atmosphere is always unbearable due to the heat when it is physical. It is either the case of non-functional air conditioning to none non-functioning ceiling fans in most of the lecture halls. Another major reason is insufficient space for sitting; GNS classes are general classes which makes them too large to be effective.

Figure 4 revealed that the third factor revealed students' reasons, such as lack of phone and data required for the virtual classes, poor network, time management, and transportation problems. Some students felt the classes were uninteresting and lacked relevance to their major course of study in the university, so they felt their major course of study was more important than the GNS course. Some do

not attend classes because their friends do not attend, and some refuse to attend because they believe they can read the textbook and pass on their own without attending classes.

Figure 5 revealed the teachers teaching the GNS as one of the reasons for their poor attendance. This is because lecturers sometimes come late to class and lack proper class management as the class is mostly noisy. The lecturers also lack the will to make the lecture explanatory and interesting enough to make the students understand and be willing to always come for more classes. Many lecturers failed to make virtual teaching and learning activity-based. Also, postponement and cancellation of classes without timely information passed across to the students.

Research Question Two: What are the probable solutions to causes related to poor attendance in GNS Classes as assessed by Undergraduate Students at the University of Ilorin?

Data on possible solutions were also presented under three themes in line with the responses. Figure 6 revealed the categories of possible solutions to poor attendance in GNS classes based on institution, students and lecturers.

Figure 7 revealed an institution solution that can encourage or promote positive class attendance at GNS, as it ranges from; making the classes be on a departmental basis rather than on a faculty basis. The students want the university to provide a more conducive seating arrangement and a hall that can accommodate the specified number of students who are required to be present in the class for physical classes. The lecturers should be time-conscious, and the unit load should be increased. The students prefer a physical class to a virtual class. Good teaching, which is the present practice, should be discouraged; classes should be less cumbersome, among others.

Figure 8, explains that some students felt eradicating the course is the solution since it is not relevant to their field of study, while others felt making the class virtual is the best once a working Wi-Fi is put in place. Figure 9 also explains the lecture-based solutions that there is the need for lecturers to always take class attendance very seriously and attract scores to it. Also, new and interesting topics should be introduced for discussion in the GNS classes.

DISCUSSION

The relevance of GNS in every university is to widen the horizon of students beyond their area of specialization. Every undergraduate in a Nigerian university they are expected to undertake general studies in key courses that help to shape moral values, societal values and entrepreneurial skills. That is why GNS 111 and 112 use English. GNS 211; Philosophy, logic and Nigerian Culture and 212: Introduction to the Social Sciences and Citizenship Education. GSE 202 theoretical aspect of entrepreneurial skills. GNS 311; is History and Philosophy of Science while GNS 301 is on practical entrepreneurial skills to be undertaken by all students despite their faculties or course of study in the University. The recent surprise now is that students are absent from these general courses' classes. It was changed from physical class to virtual, yet the attendance is low. Reasons for attendance were revealed to be in four categories based on the findings of the study—administrative, Infrastructural, Student and Lecturer factors.

From the findings of the study, it was revealed that four bodies are responsible for students' poor attendance at GNS classes. The reasons listed are administrative, infrastructural, students and lecturers. The school administration failed to make adequate provisions for a conducive

teaching-learning environment, especially when classes were held physically. Facilities such as a public address system that will make lecturers audible for students to enjoy lessons are lacking. Students also consider a constant change of lecturers as a vital reason for their poor attendance. They wanted a situation where only one lecturer would handle all the content, meaning the whole idea of team teaching was not a welcome development by the students. There is also the administrative reason for poor recording during virtual classes. When recordings are not clear and audible, students will fail to interact with such material. At times classes are cancelled with prior information regarding the class. This corroborated with the findings of Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) that there was a significant relationship between physical facilities and students' level of motivation to class attendants.

Infrastructure was another reason students' attendance at GNS was poor, such as poor or epileptic internet access and overcrowded lecture halls without electricity to power the Fan and the Air conditioners, thus making the lecturer hall so hot for effective teaching and learning process. This is in agreement with previous findings of Ayoko et al. (2023) on the inadequacy of infrastructural facilities in public universities in Nigeria, that influences effective teaching and learning in public universities.

On the part of the students constituting reasons for their poor attendance at GNS class, some of their reasons are time management on the part of the lecturers taking the class; they also claim that so many times the class are so boring. It is also a teaching center and lacks students' active participation. They also gave the irrelevance of some of the contents of the course as a reason for poor attendance. Poor transportation to school was also mentioned as a reason,

insufficient data or no data at all to join the virtual class. Some even complain that because the class is virtual, others maintain the fact they can read the textbook that is available for them, so attending class is not compulsory peer influence was also pointed out as a reason, meaning because my friend did not participate in GNS class so do I. This is in agreement with the work of Oweikpodor et al. (2022), which revealed that “most students show a negative attitude toward lectures because they can borrow lecture notes from fellow students, buy a textbook, create a study group or engage in personal reading” (p. 11).

Lastly, it was revealed that lecturers also contribute to why students’ attendance at GNS classes is so poor; in a sense, most time, they fail to keep to lecture time, thus always going late to class. Even when they come for lectures, they fail to make the lesson interesting and lack motivation. Students also claim that most class schedules are not clear. Thus, students don’t always have an idea of who or which lecturer is coming for the next class. Among the reasons given by the students is that lecturers also display a lackadaisical attitude towards the lecture, which was why most of the time they failed to control their class and the class became so noisy. Even when classes were virtual, so many lecturers were very inactive and used a teacher-centered approach. This agrees with Penteadó’s (2024) findings, which revealed that the primary excuses for skipping lectures are poor motivation by the teachers and the teaching approach which is teacher-centered.

The second finding on the possible ways of promoting students’ attendance at GNS classes, the study revealed some solutions suggested by the students, and it was categorized under three categories, which are institutional-based, student-based and lecturer-based. One of the

institutional-based suggested solutions is consistency in a physical class, meaning that the university administration should stick to one physical class. There should be an increase in the unit load of GNS. Maybe students will be more serious with class attendants when they know that it is not just two credits but three or four units. The provision of an adequate hall with good space to take care of the student population can go a long way in promoting good class attendance. The University administration should reorganize GNS to be departmental-based rather than Faculty wield. This will help to reduce the cumbersome nature of the class, and the problem of space will not arise. Also, a lecturer can conveniently handle the course without changing lecturers weekly. Institutions of learning should provide good and spacious learning spaces to promote class attendance.

Moreover, the students and lecture-based solutions suggested that emphasis should be more on the online classes, and there should be working Wi-Fi for students and the lecturers. Class attendance should be made compulsory, and it should attract marks. The lecturers also suggested that some of the topics in the GNS are obsolete; the GNS unit should try and review the content and inject more current and relevant content. The student also considers outright cancellation of the course since it is not relevant to some of their area of discipline. This is in support of the recommendations made by Ajiboye and Tella (2006) that the administration of the school should create a system for giving grades to students who attend lectures to motivate those who dislike them.

CONCLUSIONS

From the study, it was clear that undergraduates of the University of Ilorin's poor attendance to GNS classes are

centered on four major premises, which are administrative, infrastructural, students and lecturers. All these four constitute, in one way or the other, why GNS class attendees are poor. At the same time, solutions or suggestions were also institutional, student and lecturer-based. The study's conclusions lead to the following recommendations:

1. To effectively eradicate poor attendance, necessary and conducive infrastructural facilities should be put in place such as students would be encouraged to attend GNS class lectures with convenience.

2. Lecturers should be dynamic and flexible in their teaching approaches, making it more lively and engaging for students. This will reduce the level of boredom in a general class. Marks can be awarded for attendance; this will also serve as reinforcement not to miss class.

3. The institution should provide enough means of transportation to reduce the stress of getting to school for hours of lectures. This will enable the students to have a settled mind to learn and encourage them to be encouraged to attend classes.

4. The course contents for general classes should be reviewed to address current social problems, making the class interactive and helping the students to get the most out of the lectures.

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APPENDICES

Figure 1

The theme for reasons

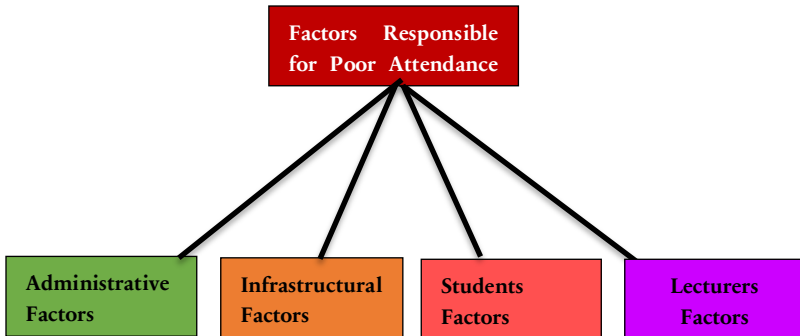


Figure 2

The administrative reasons

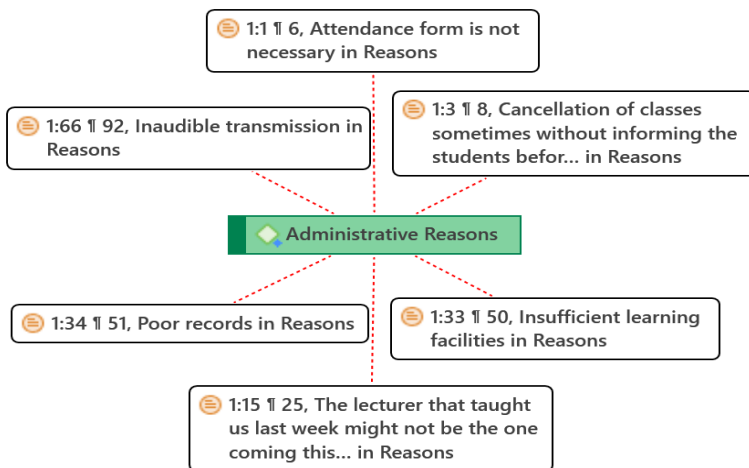


Figure 3
Infrastructural factors

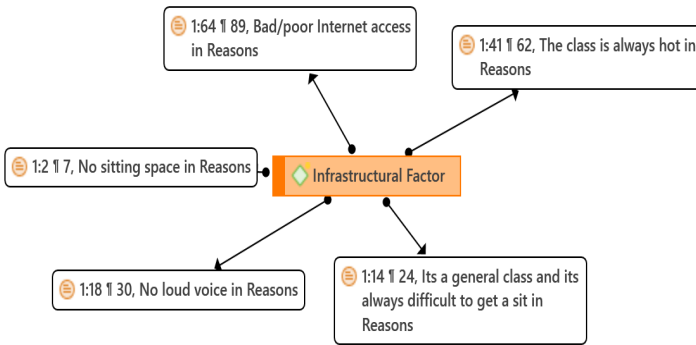


Figure 4
Students' factors



Figure 5

Lecturer factor

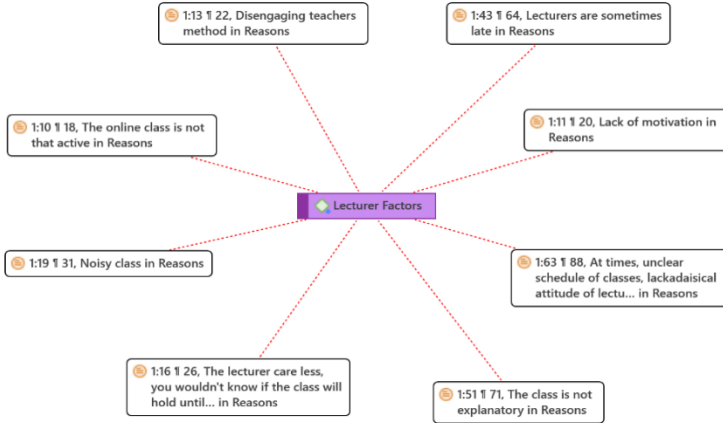


Figure 6

Possible solution

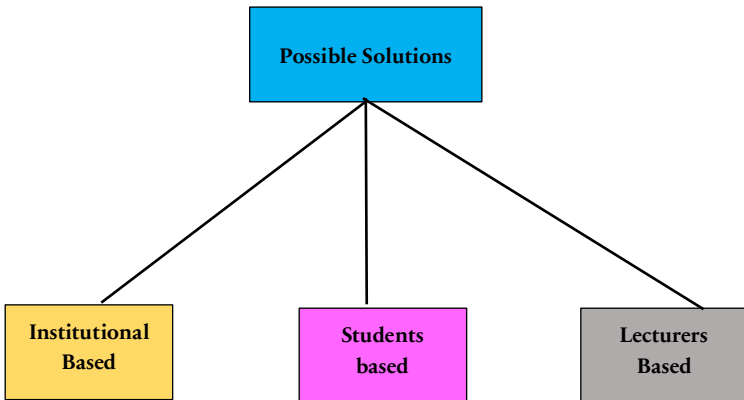


Figure 7
Institutional base solution

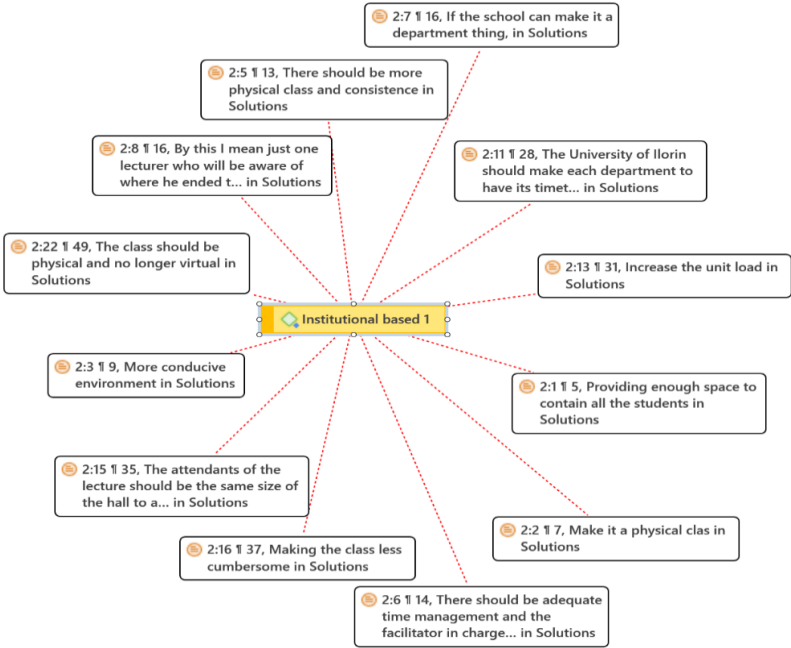


Figure 8
Student-based solutions

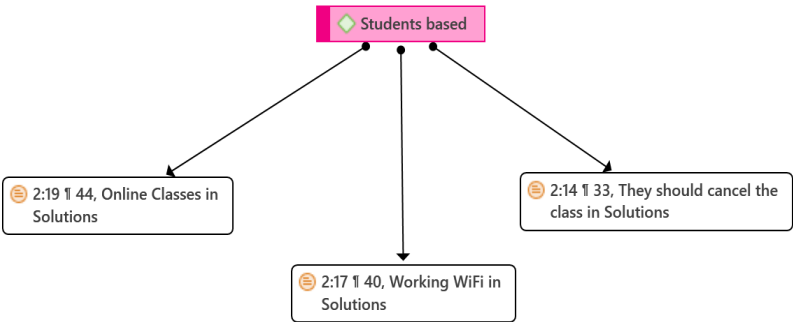
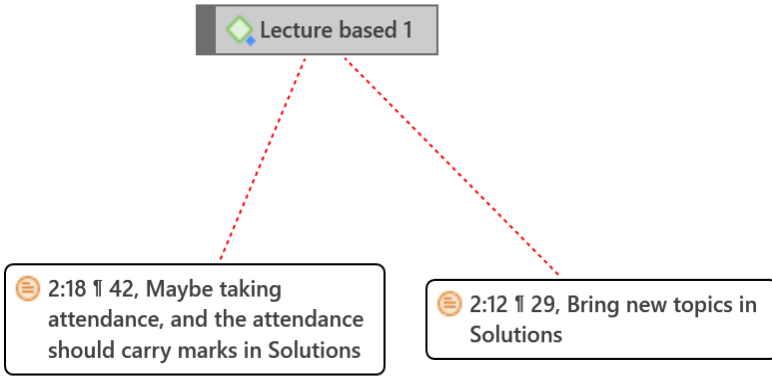


Figure 9

Lecturers-based solution



IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM: THE ROLES OF REFORM VISION, INCENTIVES AND ACTION PLAN IN TEACHER EXPERIENCES

Ebenezer Danquah¹, Emmanuella Dorcas Poku², Ellen Osei³

Abstract

This phenomenological study examined the roles of vision, action plan, and incentives in implementing a standards-based curriculum in La-Nkwantanang, Ghana, using the Knoster (1991) model. Pre-tertiary teachers have indicated they are experiencing challenges implementing the new curriculum; however, only a few studies have examined the role of vision, action plan and incentives in curriculum reforms. The purpose of this paper was to discover the roles vision, action plan and incentives play in implementing the standards-based curriculum in La-Nkwantanang. The selected participants were: a circuit supervisor, a headteacher, and seven trained pre-tertiary teachers. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using Saldana's (2013) sub-coding method. The results of this work strengthened the generalization of Knoster's change management theory as an effective model for examining teachers' concerns during a reform. Teachers recommended a) commitment to the reform action plan, b) re-communication of the reform vision, and c) provision of external incentives.

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Keywords

Standards-based curriculum, La-Nkwantanang, action plan, reform vision, incentives, Knoster's change management model

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the government of Ghana introduced a standards-based curriculum to replace the existing objectives-based curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NaCCA], 2018). The Standards-based curriculum focuses on meeting standards. According to NaCCA (2018), the purpose of this reform was to discourage learners from memorizing content to pass exams. This curriculum will encourage them to be problem solvers, critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and creative. It is expected that the standards-based curriculum will enable Ghana to meet its demand for skilled human re-sources. This objective has led to the emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and Technical and Vocational training.

The educational sector is expected to meet all the objectives of the curriculum by 2030 (NaCCA, 2018); however, the curriculum is facing challenges in its implementation in La-Nkwantanang. The problem is that pre-tertiary teachers have indicated that they are experiencing challenges implementing the new curriculum introduced in 2019 (Danquah & Poku, 2024); however, existing literature has not paid much attention to how reform vision, action plan, and incentives contribute to the experiences of teachers implementing the standards-based curriculum in La-Nkwantanang, Ghana. The findings of this study have added to the effectiveness of Knoster's (1991) change management model. This research has added that the provision of reform

vision, incentives, and an action plan contributes to the experiences of teachers implementing curriculum reforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this research, two main theoretical approaches - the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and the Knoster (1991) management model were reviewed, together with other works. This review informed the decision to employ the Knoster (1991) change management model. Fuller (1969) did the first research on teacher concerns. He postulated in a Developmental Conceptualization that teacher concerns progressed in stages: self-concerns, then task-concerns, and impact-concerns. In Fuller (1969), the CBAM was used, and subsequently, the majority of studies have been done using the CBAM (Alshammari, 2000; Ani-Boi, 2009; Apau, 2021; Christou et al., 2004; Cobbold & Ani-Boi, 2011; Kwarteng, 2016; Kwarteng et al., 2018; McCulloch & Thompson, 1981; McKinney et al., 1999; Min, 2017; Lo, 2018). Recently, there has been criticism about the validity of the generalization of CBAM (Charalambous & Philippou, 2010; Cheung & Yip, 2004; Conway & Clark, 2003; Danquah & Poku, 2024; Kwok, 2014; Min, 2017) where the findings indicated that teachers' concerns during reforms are neither fixed, generalized, nor hierarchical. The literature showed the lapses in the use of the CBAM in examining teachers' concerns.

There has been a slight shift from the use of the CBAM to Knoster's (1991) change management model (Danquah & Poku, 2024; Ebert, 2018; Kirchner, 2023; Travers, 2021). All six elements of Knoster's (1991) change management model-action plan, incentives, skills, vision, consensus, and resources were used in most of this literature. The effectiveness of Knoster's (1991) change management

model in examining the concerns of teachers during reforms was highlighted in such studies. The findings of this literature (Ebert, 2018; Kirchner, 2021; Travers, 2021) affirmed the assumptions of Knoster (1991) that if change leaders fail to provide an action plan, incentives, skills, resources, consensus, and vision, curriculum reforms will fail.

While the majority of research that used Knoster's (1991) change management model used all six elements, a recent study conducted by Danquah and Poku (2024), done in La-Nkwantanang, Ghana, employed only three of Knoster's (1991) change management elements: skills, resources, and consensus in examining pre-tertiary teacher concerns during a standards-based curriculum reform. Findings revealed that a lack of provision of resources, consensus, and skills during a curriculum reform will lead to teachers having challenging experiences. While the research employed just three elements, findings affirmed the effectiveness of Knoster's (1991) change management model in examining teacher concerns during reforms. While the findings of Danquah and Poku (2024) aligned with the assumptions of Knoster (1991), the elements used were three: creating a gap for the unused components: vision, action plan, and incentives. This gap makes it difficult to accept Knoster's (1991) change management model as a tool for examining teacher experiences during a curriculum reform in La-Nkwantanang, Ghana.

The majority of existing research examining the roles of vision, incentives, and action plan in curriculum reform implementation in Ghana was not based on Knoster (1991). Most of this literature was also not limited to La-Nkwantanang. Ampomah (2020) found that while tutors may be happy with the provision of training, resources, and support systems, the absence of incentives negatively affects the

curriculum implementation, making it difficult to implement the curriculum effectively. Abudu and Mensah (2016), and Wongnaa and Boachie (2018) also identified a lack of incentives as one of the major factors contributing to the poor implementation of reforms in Ghana. However, these studies were not limited to La-Nkwantanang and also failed to examine the role of vision and action plan in teacher concerns during reforms (Abudu & Mensah, 2016; Ampomah, 2020; Wongnaa & Boachie, 2018).

In their research, Poku et al. (2013) identified a lack of an action plan and commitment as one of the main reasons behind the continuous failure and introduction of curriculum reforms in Ghana. In another work conducted in Ghana, but not limited to La-Nkwantanang, Mohammed and Kuyini (2021) argued that the lack of commitment to the reform action plan due to the over-politicization of reforms in Ghana has led to the neglect of vital implementation stages, causing hiccups in the reform. Another research, which is also not limited to La-Nkwantanang, by Owusu et al. (2016), found that a lack of commitment to the action plan has led to the failure of several reforms in Ghana. Notwithstanding, these researchers also did not examine the role of vision and incentives in curriculum reforms (Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021; Owusu et al., 2016; Poku et al., 2013). Abudu (2023) identified reform vision as an important factor for curriculum design. However, he did not examine the role of action plans and incentives in curriculum implementation, and this work was also not limited to La-Nkwantanang.

For change managers to successfully diagnose and manage concerns during reforms, all six elements: vision, action plan, incentives, skills, resources, and consensus need to be pre-sent; otherwise, the reform will not be successful

(Knoster, 1991). These reviewed articles showed the following gaps: (a) only few studies have been conducted using the Knoster (1991) change management model in examining the concerns of teachers during curriculum reforms (Danquah & Poku, 2024; Ebert, 2018; Kirchner, 2021; Travers 2021); (b) existing study done in La-Nkwantanang did not look at how reform vision, action plan, and incentives contribute to teacher concerns (Danquah & Poku, 2024); (c) only a few studies have been done on teacher experiences during curriculum reforms in Ghana (Agormedah et al., 2019; Ani-Boi, 2009; Apau, 2021; Cobbold & Ani-Boi, 2011; Danquah & Poku, 2024; Donkoh, 2016; Kwarteng, 2016; Kwarteng et al., 2018); and (d) existing literature did not look at the roles of vision, action plan and incentives in curriculum reforms concurrently (Abudu, 2023; Abudu & Mensah, 2016; Ampomah, 2020; Mohammed & Kuyini, 2021; Owusu et al.; 2016; Poku et al., 2013; Wongnaa & Boachie, 2018). The identified gaps informed the decision to examine the role of vision, action plan, and incentives in teachers' experiences during a curriculum reform in La-Nkwantanang concurrently. Figure 1 is an illustration of Knoster's (1991) change management model.

The theoretical framework of this study is the Knoster (1991) change management model. This model was originally designed by Mary Lippitt in 1985. Initially, vision, incentives, an action plan, skills, and resources were assumed to be the elements that affect change. In 1991, Timothy Knoster added consensus to Lippitt's change management model. According to Caredda (2020), this model serves as a diagnostic tool that can determine what is missing in an ongoing change process. This means that this model can be used to manage a reform that is being implemented. According to Knoster (1991), for any change process to be

successful, all six elements must be present simultaneously. Failing to present the six elements, change implementers will exhibit confusion, sabotage, anxiety, resistance, frustration, and false starts. Danquah and Poku (2024), Ebert (2018), Kirchner (2021), and Travers (2021) found that Knoster's (1991) change management model is effective at managing change concerns, and that the absence of consensus, skills, and resources caused implementation challenges. The results of these findings prompted the use of Knoster's (1991) change management model to examine the experiences of pre-tertiary teachers in this current study.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study examined the roles of vision, action plan and incentives in pre-tertiary teachers during a curriculum reform in La-Nkwantanang concurrently. Haven and Van Grootel (2019) argue that qualitative research allows the researcher to collect and analyze in-depth information about issues from participants. The qualitative approach used in this research allowed the researchers to collect in-depth information on how vision, action plan, and incentives has contributed to teachers' experiences during the new curriculum (2019) implementation in La-Nkwantanang.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Find out how reform vision contributes to the experiences of teachers implementing the standard-based curriculum in La-Nkwantanang, Ghana.

2. Ascertain the role incentives play in teachers' experiences in implementing the standard-based curriculum,
3. Find out how an action plan contributes to the experiences of teachers implementing the standard-based curriculum.

Research questions

From the literature review, here are the research questions for this research:

1. What role does the provision of incentives play in the experiences of pre-tertiary teachers regarding implementing the new curriculum?
2. What role does the reform action plan play in teachers' experiences regarding implementing the new curriculum?
3. How does reform vision contribute to the experiences of pre-tertiary teachers implementing the new curriculum?

Research design

In this study, the phenomenological approach allowed for the collection of in-depth information on the roles of vision, action plan, and incentives on the experiences of teachers implementing the new curriculum (2019). Haven and Van Grootel (2019) argue that phenomenology allows the researcher to get the essence of a phenomena through enquiry.

Data collection methods

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interview responses were recorded from all nine participants. Important

documents like the Educational Strategic Plan (2018-2030), text-books, teachers' resource and training packs, Guidelines for the Operation of Parent Association, the new curriculum, and the Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan (2018-2021) were further analyzed, and finally, all the schools' facilities-classroom, resources, teaching and learning materials were observed.

Population

This study was conducted in La-Nkwantanang, a municipality in Ghana. The population of La-Nkwantanang is 244,676 people, 63.3% youth; and 72% literates (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021) La-Nkwantanang is known for its vibrant economy activities—health, education, commercial and service sectors. Nine pre-tertiary teachers were purposively selected from the kindergarten to junior high school from the nine circuits; one headteacher, one circuit supervisor and seven teachers. A criterion selection method was used in order to select teachers who were experiencing the new curriculum (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Data analysis

The collected data were transcribed and analyzed with Saldana's (2013) sub-coding approach. The codes were identified, followed by the generation of categories, and finally, the themes. Participants were given pseudonyms for confidentiality and anonymity reasons. A manual data analysis was used due to the small sample size, nine participants.

Ethical considerations

All necessary ethical considerations were made. Permission was sought from the District Education Office of La-

Nkwantanang. To control bias, a triangulated data collection method was employed. Pseudonyms were used for confidentiality purposes. Collected data, recorded responses, consent forms, and other documents were kept away from the view of others during and after data collection. The consent of participants was sought before collecting the data. The criterion sampling process was used to purposively select only pre-tertiary teachers experiencing the new curriculum in La-Nkwantanang.

RESULTS

Saldana's (2013) sub-coding method was used to analyze the data. This enabled us to identify the themes, subcategories, and codes. Table 1 is the representation of the summarized findings of this study. The data represented here are interview responses from the nine participants (seven teachers, one circuit supervisor, and one headteacher), observation, and document analysis.

Theme 1: Experience of ineffective curriculum implementation due to lack of extrinsic motivation

Participants emphasized that their intrinsic motivation had kept them in their delivery of duties all these years. However, the effectiveness of this new curriculum (2019) depends on external motivators such as student performance, supervision, resources, and free, continuous training. According to Teacher 1,

We wish policymakers could do more because of the cost of the internet to download lesson notes and other learning material. They gave us some money, but they are taking them back with the cost of workshops. Now when we go for workshops, we pay for everything. We are not even

motivated to attend workshops; unfortunately, our lives depend on them. The more workshops we go to, the more we will get promotions. If we go for less, our license will get revoked, which has become a challenge for us. We wish they had better incentives given to us. (Teacher 1, Interview 3: Folder 1)

Response from Teacher 1 revealed that teachers were incurring costs that were resulting from implementing the new curriculum. Participants said the costs of internet and training were making it difficult to implement the new curriculum. Participants revealed that they had some money; however, the system was swallowing back the money due to the cost of workshops. Letters from Ghana Education Service and online E-pay slips of teachers revealed that,

The money given to teachers as part of this curriculum reform was a Continuous Professional Development Allowance to pay for workshop costs. The annual allowance that was supposed to be received by every teacher is 1,200 cedis. However, this money is taxed and reduced from source. It is this same money (1,200) that an amount of 547 is deducted from as payment of 30% cost of laptops to be given to teachers. (Document Analysis: Folder 3: Bulletin 15)

Teacher 1 and the document analysis findings showed that teachers were not given any monetary incentive, bonus, or a salary increment for implementing the new curriculum. Response from Teacher 1 indicated that teachers wished they had some form of monetary incentives for implementing the new curriculum. This is because the new curriculum came with extra costs- internet, buying new textbooks, and other teaching materials. Teachers wished for continuous professional development, and the laptops were free. This would have motivated them. However, the implementation

of the new curriculum seems to be putting an extra toll on their incomes, and this is demotivating them. Teacher 6 had this to say:

There is no incentive or any form of motivation. Even sometimes, we search the internet and do not get any meaningful information to give the students. The performances of the kids are becoming worse. How do we get motivated to teach learner-centered pedagogy without infrastructure? No one comes to supervise to see what is happening. (Teacher 6, Interview 8: Folder 1)

Participant 6 believed that learners' performances were getting worse. This demotivated them from implementing the new curriculum. Assessment provides the teacher with information on the learners' strengths and weaknesses. Response from the teacher 6 indicated that if students' performances were good, they would have been motivated to implement the curriculum. It could also mean that if they had supervision, they would have been guided as to what to do in order to improve students' performances, and the absence of supervision is demotivating them. Tanner (2010) argued that if change is time-consuming, then the efforts of the teacher must be appreciated. One of the tools to assess teachers' performance is student assessment. The performances of students help the teacher to know how well the lesson was delivered. Hiatt (2006) argues that for change to be successful, there should be reinforcement. Though teachers always dwell on intrinsic motivation, employers must provide teachers with other extrinsic rewards like teacher involvement in school development, professional training, and supportive evaluation (Amos & Loko, 2015). Theme 1 affirms Knoster's (1991) assumption that without the provision of incentives, change implementers will experience challenges implementing a change. Analysis of Guidelines

for the Operation of Parent Association, homework books, the new curriculum, and the Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan (2018-2021) revealed:

The Parent's Association was involved in the curriculum development and also recognized by GES. The group is still allowed to give out incentives to support schools; however, the group is suspended from levying students to pay monies to support schools. Parents are not obliged to pay fees- feeding fees, boarding fees, exams, tuition fee, etc., or buy textbooks or uniforms. Everything is catered for by the government of Ghana. Most students had unsubmitted homework assignments. (Document Analysis: Folder 3: Bulletin 16)

This analysis indicated that parents were excused from all monetary obligations. Though parents were part of developing the curriculum, parents are not obliged to support its implementation. Parents are at liberty not to motivate or support their wards' schools. Even in challenging times, parents are not obliged to come in with their support. Why are students not being guided to do their homework? The circuit supervisor also had this to say:

We used to have a school system where parents could support whenever we fell short, but now, the government says parents should not pay for anything, which is a big challenge. We look up to the government for everything. We do not have any source of funds to pay for security, refuse, and cleaners. We are in filth. However, the government is yet to bring us support. We are at the mercy of God. (CS; Interview 1: Folder 1)

The response from the Circuit Supervisor suggested that support from parents was a great incentive in curriculum implementation. Contributions from parents served as a source of incentives to support the school in implementing

curriculum reforms in La-Nkwantanang. According to the CS, they were experiencing challenges of filth and unpaid bills because of a lack of support from the government. Document analysis revealed that the President has sought financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). How will the government cater to the needs of students, teachers, and schools? Araghieh (2022) established that parental involvement in curriculum development and implementation is key to curriculum success. These findings are reflected in the observations made:

Students writing exams were borrowing basic things like pencils, and crayons from their peers. The schools' backyards were engulfed in filth with unavoidable stench. (Observation: Folder 2)

Observations made revealed that teachers were struggling. Imagine teaching students without books, pencils, and textbooks. This was the situation of teachers implementing the new curriculum in La-Nkwantanang. Teachers were not allowed to ask parents to buy these essential materials. Teachers could only wait and hope parents see the need to provide for them, or wait for the government to take care of the needs of the learners. If the parents have neglected essential needs for their wards, what shows will they voluntarily support the school? Teachers were demotivated because problems that could have been solved easily with parental involvement were left unattended.

Theme 2: Experience of fear of unmet objectives due to lack of commitment to implementation strategy - politics and unfulfilled promises

Participants were of the view that they were afraid of not meeting curriculum objectives because of a lack of leadership commitment to the implementation strategy. Knoster

(1991) argued that change leaders must provide and commit to implementation strategy before and during organizational reforms; otherwise, there will be a false start. The long-term roll-out plan of this reform (2019) is that the country should meet the objectives of the curriculum by 2030. Participants feared that this reform would be changed when a new government comes. According to the CS,

This reform is a window opportunity that will allow learners to explore all the courses before they select their favorite courses through self-assessment. This reform will guide their course choices in tertiary school. It will prevent the diversion of courses, provided the implementation of this policy will continue regardless of the political party in power. We cannot implement an educational policy and expect to see good results within 4-8 years. (C.S., Interview 1: Folder 1)

The strategies put in place to meet the objectives of this new curriculum have been spread out from 2018 to 2030, and terminating the curriculum before 2030 will not be a good idea. (Document Analysis: Folder 3: Bulletin 15)

Findings from document analysis buttressed the point that if the curriculum is changed before 2030, the country will not be able to meet the set objectives of the curriculum. In the same vein, if the strategies put in place are not committed to, the curriculum will eventually fail. Cunningham (2018) also emphasized that too many shines in this new curriculum (2019). For a country to meet curriculum objectives, curriculum implementation must be void of political interference (Adu et al., 2016). Analysis of the Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2018-2021 and the Educational political ambitions have led to Africa's failures in 21st-century curricula reforms. According to Teacher 6,

The rollout plan has met many contradictions. The leadership said they would train all of us at once, but they trained the primary teachers before us. They also said we were all going to use the curriculum, but later, we heard J.H.S. teachers were supposed to revert to the old curriculum. They said it would be a semester-based program, but we have now gone back to the old system. We began to write the lesson notes, but they said we should not write them; we should download them. They rushed with the implementation of the new curriculum. (Teacher 6, Interview 8: Folder 1)

Response from Teacher 6 indicated that teachers were unhappy about the several contradictions in the implementation strategy. The Circuit Supervisor revealed how much teachers wished this curriculum (2019) could be allowed to reach its maturity stage before it is either changed or revised. This response indicated teachers like the new curriculum (2019), despite its challenges, as Aboagye and Yawson (2020) concluded in their study. However, they were scared that continuous political interference in educational reforms, as seen over the years, would destroy the new curriculum. The Strategic Plan 2018-2030 revealed that the new curriculum (2019) implementation was in a rush, and also without considering the formulated strategies. Unfulfilled promises were a concern to teachers because it was causing teachers to worry about whether they would be able to meet curriculum objectives by 2030. Document analysis revealed that,

Educational leadership promised teachers teaching and learning resources before the implementation of the curriculum in September 2019; however, the Education Sector Medium-term Development Plan 2018-2021 indicated that the provision of teaching and learning

resources will be made available from 2022 to 2025.
(Document Analysis: Folder 3: Bulletin 16)

Document analysis and response from Teacher 6 showed that there have been contradictions in the strategy plan at the implementation stage. What is causing these contradictions? Unfulfilled promises are negatively affecting the implementation of this curriculum, and if they are not resolved, it could lead to the possible failure of the curriculum (2019). Eppler et al. (2010) argued that the success of reform strategy is not solely dependent on strategy formulation but also on a commitment to the formulated strategy. Knoster (1991) advised change leaders to commit to the implementation strategy because it serves as the roadmap describing the who, what, when, and how.

Theme 3: Experience of ineffective curriculum implementation due to insufficient understanding of reform vision

Participants believed *insufficient understanding of the reform vision* has made the implementation of the new curriculum ineffective. Participants believed they were experiencing challenges in implementing the new curriculum because they were not informed about the vision of the curriculum reform before its introduction. Teacher 5 had this to say:

I heard about the information on the radio, but it was at the training that we heard of the need to change the new curriculum. We had no policy document to pre-inform us on the need for the change. As of now, some of us are even struggling to do certain things the curriculum demands, making things difficult. (Teacher 5, Interview 7: Folder 1)

From Teacher 5, no policy document informed teachers about the need and urgency for this curriculum reform (2019), making their work difficult. Participants believed that if they had been pre-informed about the vision of the reform, they would have gotten enough time to assimilate and understand the reform vision better. Understanding the reform vision before its commencement would have helped teachers to meet the expectations of the new curriculum. Kotter (1996) said that one of the steps for organizational leaders to take when introducing a change is to bring those outside the change inside by creating a sense of urgency. By creating a sense of urgency, policymakers could have discussed the performance of the old curriculum against the performance of other countries using the Standards-Based Curriculum. These prior discussions would have prepared the teachers enough for this reform. The discussion about the performance of the Objective-Based Curriculum and the Standard-based Curriculum could have given the teachers a clearer picture of the need for this change. Analysis of the Complete Overview of the New Curriculum and other online documents revealed that:

The former Education Minister of Ghana, Professor Kwasi Opoku-Amankwah, spoke about the vision of the curriculum on 11th April 2019. This was after the curriculum was prepared and introduced. (Document Analysis: Folder 3: Bulletin 3)

From the document analysis, the former Education Minister of Ghana, Professor Kwasi Opoku-Amankwah, spoke about the vision of the new curriculum (2019) at its launch. Mentioning or reading something to someone is not the same as explaining it to the person. Every reform vision answers the question of why we have to change. The introduction of the reform vision should have been a detailed

explanation of the essence of the change. The launch of the new curriculum was at a national press briefing conference, and not a compulsory teachers' meeting. To address these gaps, Vukotich (2011) advised agents of change to allow their employees to come to a complete understanding of the purpose and impact of the change before introducing organizational reforms. Wentz (2017) also advised that in engaging the public about a policy, change leaders must go to where the people can be found. Meeting teachers at the local level to discuss the reform vision would have given teachers better chances to understand the vision. Teacher 2 said this,

Nothing has changed; it is only the terminology that has changed. Formerly, we used to say syllabus, but now, it is called curriculum. We used to say activities, but now, it is exemplars. The approach has changed. (Teacher 2, Interview 4: Folder 1)

Teacher 2's statement revealed that teachers are experiencing insufficient understanding of the reform vision. Teacher 2 believed the only thing in their curriculum was terminology. This response revealed a lack of understanding. Educational leadership must address every misunderstanding of reform objectives to prevent teachers from attributing different meanings to the curriculum vision. This will prevent teachers from using different maps to implement curriculum reforms, and this will be chaotic (Bantwini, 2010). Analysis of the Teacher Resource Pack and National Pre-tertiary Curriculum Framework 2018 also revealed that,

There is a difference between the new curriculum and the old curriculum in terms of their objectives, philosophies, methodologies, rationale, and classroom implications for

teachers and learners. (Document Analysis: Folder 3: Bulletin 5)

This revelation from the Teacher Resource Packs and National Curriculum Framework indicated that teachers might not have read these documents, or they have read them; however, they did not understand the difference and its application in the classroom. If Teacher 2 understood the vision of the new curriculum, she should have known that it is not only the terminologies that have changed, but the pedagogy, content, philosophy, and objectives have also changed. This lack of ability to differentiate between the old and new curricula could be a result of teachers failing to read the new curriculum framework. Bantwini (2010) found that teachers refuse to read curriculum documents because they see them as voluminous, and that it is the responsibility of educational leadership to explain the curriculum to them. Jensen et al. (2018) advised that organizational leadership must use face-to-face means to communicate the reform's vision and any information about the implementation to employees. Theme 3 indicated that though educational leadership considered the reform vision on paper, it is missing at the implementation stage because teachers do not understand it. Theme 3 also showed how the reform vision affects the concerns of teachers and the need to resolve these concerns, as suggested by Knoster's (2019) model.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that pre-tertiary teachers in La-Nkwantanang, Ghana, were experiencing challenges in implementing the new curriculum (2019) due to a lack of understanding of the reform vision, a lack of

commitment to the reform action plan, and incentives. Teachers stressed the role of students' performance and parental involvement in external motivation. This was an unusual revelation. These findings showed that, aside from the findings of Danquah and Poku (2024), which indicated that the pre-tertiary teachers in La-Nkwantanang were experiencing challenges due to a lack of resources, skills, and consensus. This study found that the teachers in La-Nkwantanang were also experiencing additional challenges due to a lack of leadership commitment to the action plan, a lack of incentives, and vision.

This study has shown that if curriculum leadership were to use the initial findings of Danquah and Poku (2024), the challenges of the teachers implementing the new curriculum would persist. The findings have shown the importance of providing action plans, reform vision, and incentives during reforms. It has been shown that none of the elements stated by Knoster (1991) can be overlooked. It has been shown that if leadership provides skills, resources, and consensus but fails to provide an action plan, incentives, and vision, the reform will fail, as posited by Knoster (1991). This is why this study needed to be conducted, so that the in-depth information on the teachers' experiences will be brought to light, so that educational leadership will be able to provide the correct solutions to their challenges. This study has bridged the theoretical gap that existed in the previous study done in La-Nkwantanang concerning the experiences of teachers implementing the new curriculum in La-Nkwantanang. These current findings have shown that it was necessary to conduct this study to ascertain the full experiences of teachers implementing the new curriculum in La-Nkwantanang. This study has strengthened the generalization of Knoster's (1991) change management model.

CONCLUSIONS

The standards-based curriculum has been adopted as a tool to help Ghana achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. However, the pre-tertiary teachers in La-Nkwantanang in Ghana have indicated that they are experiencing challenges implementing the curriculum. For this curriculum implementation to be successful, the educational leadership must not only provide teachers with resources, skills, and consensus forums, but they also need to provide the teachers with incentives, commitment to an action plan, and reform vision.

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APPENDICES

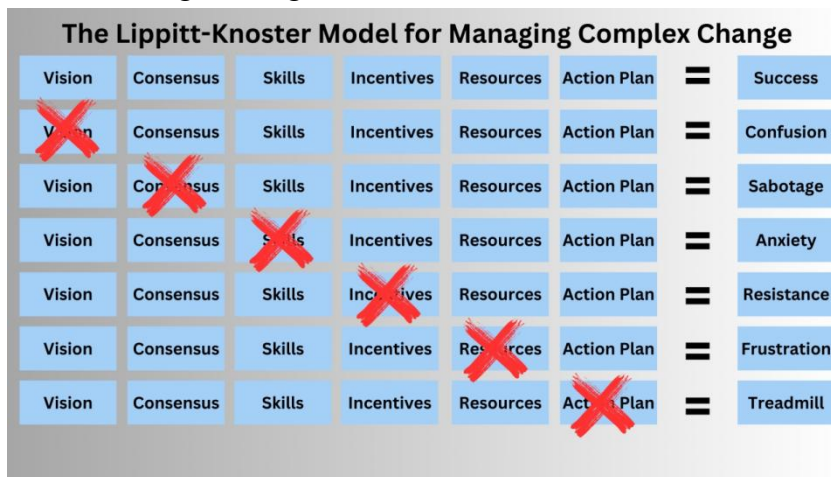
Table 1

Summarized data of findings

Research questions	Themes	Categories	Key Concepts
1. What role does the provision of incentives play in the experiences of pre-tertiary teachers regarding implementing the new curriculum?	Experience of Ineffective implementation of curriculum due to lack extrinsic motivation	No Extrinsic Motivation	Cost of C.P.D. training; Cost of Internet; Cost of textbooks; No T.L.M.s; no external supervision; Worsening performance of students
2. What role does the reform action plan play in teachers' experiences regarding implementing the new curriculum?	Experience of Fear of unmet objectives due to lack of commitment to implementation strategy	Politics in educational reforms in Ghana Unfulfilled Promises	Changing curriculum before its maturity date So many changes in action plan
3. How does reform vision contribute to the experiences of pre-tertiary teachers implementing the new curriculum?	Experience of Ineffective curriculum implementation due to insufficient knowledge on reform vision	Lack of ability to differentiate Old and new curriculum	Implemented the curriculum in a rush Vision rushed over and ineffective large No difference No prior information

Figure 1

Knoster Change Management Model



Themes book example

Themes	Categories	Quotations
Theme: Insufficient understanding of reform vision	<p>Insufficient Preparation time</p> <p>Lack of ability to differentiate old and new curriculum</p>	<p>As a municipality, whatever information that GES has, it sends the information to our regional directors through to our municipal directors to give us the purpose for the change. All this information was given to the teachers at the training to give them insight about the new curriculum so that they can use the new curriculum. We were educated and some of the staff (CS) were selected for a training to impart the knowledge on the teachers. We were informed, but the time limit was too short. Because the time notice was too short, many people were taken aback. (CS)</p> <p>I see that nothing has changed; it is only the terminology that has changed. Formerly, we used to say syllabus but now, its curriculum. We used to say activities but now, its exemplars. It is the approach that has changed” (Teacher2)</p>

Theme: lack of teacher motivation

No Extrinsic Motivation

I wish policy makers could do better because of the cost of the internet and other costs we incur, they have to do better for us. They gave some money the last time but they are taking them back with workshops. Now when you go for workshops, you pay for everything. So, we are not even motivated to go for some of the workshops and unfortunately, our lives depend on it. The more workshops you go to, the more you will get promotions. If you go for less, your license will be revoked and this has become a challenge to us. We wish they had better the incentives given to us. (Teacher 1)

There is no incentive or any form of motivation. Even sometimes you search through the internet and don't get any meaningful information to give to the students. The performance of the kids is becoming worse. How do you get motivated to teach learner centered pedagogies without infrastructure? No one comes to supervise to see what is happening. (Teacher 6)

THE IMPACT OF TEACHER EDUCATORS' INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' LEARNING EXPERIENCES: A CASE STUDY OF A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE IN SOUTHERN TANZANIA

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Abstract

This research aimed at investigating the impact of teacher educators' practices on pre-service teachers' during their teacher preparation program. The study focused on practices such as preparation of teaching and learning materials, instructional strategies, leadership as well as the incorporation of gender, inclusion and diversity in teaching and learning. Data for this study was collected from longitudinal research which employed a mixed-method design, following a pragmatic philosophical worldview. Fourteen teacher educators and 108 pre-service teachers were purposively selected from one public teacher education college in southern Tanzania. The findings indicate that teacher educators' practices have an impact on pre-service teachers' pedagogical practices. The pre-service teachers' experiences focused is rooted all the way back to their previous levels of

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education such as pre-primary and primary, which in turn motivated some of them to opt for a teaching career. Based on the given findings, teacher educators play a role in shaping pre-service teacher educators understanding about teaching and learning.

Keywords

Pre-service teachers' experiences, educators' practices, teacher preparation program, teaching and learning environment, teacher education

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' competences rely on the teacher educator's efficacy and continuous teacher's professional learning. Therefore, it is critical to showcase how significant the teacher educator's practices influence novice teachers in building their competencies in the teaching profession. This study is based on the intervention designed and carried out by the Aga Khan University Institute for Education Development East Africa (AKU-IED-EA) through the Foundation for Learning (F4L) project. F4L program, among other things, conducted workshops and seminars to build teacher educators' capacity in inclusive education, gender sensitivity and diversity pedagogy. The intervention was tailored to equip teacher educators with knowledge, skills, and dispositions that would enable them to implement pre-primary and primary education programs for pre-service teachers to become effective in their pedagogical and instructional practices.

Apart from the intervention, the F4L project has a longitudinal study research component that was designed to document the nature of the interventions and the kind of observable pedagogical changes in both the teacher educators and the pre-service teachers. This study examines how the F4L interventions influenced changes in the pedagogical practices of teacher educators, and how these modifications

in teaching approaches affected the experiences and practices of pre-service teachers. In Tanzania, the F4L project interventions were implemented in the Lindi region, located in southern Tanzania, where teacher educators underwent re-training. Data for this paper was gathered from the long-term study of the F4L program.

The process of educating learners ought to be implemented by competent teachers who went through effective teacher preparation programs. What matters most is not just how long the program lasts, but the entire experience of how the program is carried out. The teaching and learning materials, as well as instructional and pedagogical strategies used by teacher educators in teacher preparation programs, have a great influence on student teachers' (pre-service teachers) knowledge, attitudes and skills concerning their teaching career. The aforementioned aspects can be observed through pre-service teachers' teaching and learning practices. It is clear that if pre-service teachers are proficient, they are anticipated to excel in their teaching careers, thereby enhancing the significance of teacher education (Feuer et al., 2013). The role of teacher educators is crucial in training teachers who can significantly influence the education system as a whole, by demonstrating strong learner performance that assists students in navigating the challenges they face in everyday life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher preparation programs

Teacher preparation programs serve as foundational spaces where pre-service teachers acquire pedagogical knowledge, subject mastery, and initial classroom experience (Denuga & Nkengbeza, 2022). These programs are

crucial in shaping competent teachers for pre-primary, primary, and secondary education.

Scholars emphasize the need to integrate crosscutting issues such as gender, inclusion, and diversity into teacher preparation (González-Gil et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2015). While these elements are increasingly acknowledged as fundamental, their implementation remains inconsistent. Botes and colleagues argue that inclusive teaching should be central to general teacher education rather than treated as an add-on (Botes et al., 2022). This resonates with the social constructivist perspective, which underscores that learning occurs within social contexts and that pre-service teachers develop their teaching identities through interactions with their educators and peers (Shah, 2019). Thus, teacher education must move beyond content delivery and embrace experiential learning that fosters critical reflection on real classroom challenges.

A critical examination of existing literature reveals a persistent gap between theoretical coursework and practical application, a challenge that practicum components in teacher preparation programs aim to address (Akyeampong, 2017). However, practicum experiences often remain constrained by institutional limitations, leading to a disconnect between pre-service teachers' training and their real-world teaching expectations.

Additionally, the contemporary teaching landscape necessitates that teachers stay abreast of global trends, including digital innovations like artificial intelligence (AI) and environmental education (UNESCO, 2015). While teacher preparation programs acknowledge these needs, their curricula often fail to equip pre-service teachers with the requisite skills to integrate them effectively into classroom practice. Theoretical discussions on lifelong learning and

competency-based education should be matched with concrete pedagogical strategies that enable teachers to adapt to changing educational demands.

Teacher educators' practices

Teacher educators play a pivotal role in shaping the pedagogical and professional identities of pre-service teachers (Feuer et al., 2013; Namamba & Rao, 2017). Their instructional approaches, feedback mechanisms, and modeling of best practices significantly influence how pre-service teachers internalize and apply teaching strategies. Yet, the effectiveness of teacher educators varies widely, often influenced by their own training, institutional policies, and available resources.

While studies suggest that teacher educators should exemplify innovative teaching practices such as learner-centered pedagogy and inclusive education, research reveals that many still rely on traditional, didactic methods (Mufidah, 2019). Theoretically, social constructivism posits that learning is mediated by social interactions (Seel, 2012), meaning that pre-service teachers are more likely to adopt pedagogies they observe in action rather than those merely discussed in lectures. Kihwele and Mtandi (2020) emphasize that teacher educators who advocate for inclusive and gender-responsive pedagogy must also model these approaches in their own teaching. The failure to do so results in a superficial understanding of these concepts among pre-service teachers, reinforcing traditional teacher-centered practices in schools.

Moreover, assessment practices in teacher education remain an area of concern. Feedback provided during practicum is critical for professional growth, yet research indicates that many pre-service teachers receive generic or

inconsistent feedback, limiting their ability to refine their teaching strategies (Zhao & Zhang, 2017). Constructive feedback, grounded in reflective practice, is essential for developing adaptive teaching skills, yet it is often sidelined in favor of summative evaluations. A shift toward mentorship-driven assessment, where teacher educators engage in ongoing professional dialogue with pre-service teachers, is necessary to foster deep learning and skill acquisition.

Pre-service teachers' experience

Pre-service teachers enter training programs with preconceived beliefs and expectations about teaching, largely shaped by their prior educational experiences (Denuga & Nkengbeza, 2022). Social constructivist theory suggests that these beliefs influence how they assimilate new pedagogical knowledge and navigate their professional identity formation (Shah, 2019). However, studies highlight that pre-service teachers often struggle to reconcile their initial perceptions with the realities of classroom teaching (White & McSharry, 2021).

Zhao and Zhang (2017) assert that pre-service teachers undergo a complex transformation during their training, often oscillating between adopting new methodologies and reverting to familiar, traditional practices. This process is compounded by the tendency of pre-service teachers to validate rather than critically examine their preconceived notions of teaching (Denuga & Nkengbeza, 2022). Consequently, if teacher educators fail to engage in reflective and interactive teaching methodologies, pre-service teachers may leave training programs ill-equipped to implement innovative pedagogies in their own classrooms.

Furthermore, mentorship plays a crucial role in shaping pre-service teachers' pedagogical development. Studies

show that effective mentorship fosters professional confidence and instructional adaptability (Florian & Camedda, 2020; Mufidah, 2019). However, when mentorship is inconsistent or overly directive, it can stifle the critical thinking and autonomy needed for sustained professional growth. Thus, teacher education programs should prioritize mentorship frameworks that encourage dialogue, reflection, and gradual independence.

A critical review of the literature reveals that while teacher preparation programs, teacher educators' practices, and pre-service teachers' experiences are interconnected, significant gaps persist in their alignment. Social constructivism underscores the importance of interactive and experiential learning, yet much of teacher education remains rooted in traditional, transmission-based methods. The evidence suggests that for meaningful improvements in teacher preparation, there must be a deliberate effort to integrate reflective practice, contextualized mentorship, and adaptive pedagogical training. Without such shifts, pre-service teachers risk perpetuating outdated teaching models rather than engaging in transformative education practices.

Statement of the problem

Teacher educators play a crucial role in teacher preparation, teacher education, and the overall education system. However, on a global scale, limited research exists on teacher preparation practices which directly impacts pre-service teachers' learning experiences. For instance, a study conducted by Stutchbury (2019) found a disconnect between theory and practices in teacher educators' preparation, which affected their professional practices. Similarly, in Uganda, O'Sullivan (2010) observed that the quality of

initial teacher education was inadequate, further hindering their effectiveness.

The professional practice of teacher educators has a lasting influence on pre-service teachers' teaching experiences and professional growth. In Tanzania, like any other countries in Africa, and particularly with the East African region, teacher educators face similar challenges (Chambulila, 2013; Namamba & Rao, 2017). According to Hamilton and Margot (2019), teacher educators are a key driving force in preparation of quality teachers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of teacher educators' practices on pre-service teachers' learning experiences, focusing on a teacher preparation college in Southern Tanzania.

Theoretical framework

The study was underpinned by the social-constructivist theory (SCT) invented by Lev Vygotsky in 1968 (Seel, 2012; Shah, 2019; Thomas et al., 2014) which postulates that learners construct their knowledge through social interactions of what they believe and already know (Shah, 2019). They also learn through events and activities which they come into contact with (Thomas et al., 2014). The SCT stresses education for social transformation and positions the individual learner in a socio-cultural learning situation (Shah, 2019). Although the SCT is not a theory of teaching, its emphasis on learners' active participation in constructing knowledge and creating meaning through interaction; makes it relevant to the proposed longitudinal study which intends to investigate how F4L interventions have impacted teacher educator's practices, to the extent of influencing pre-service teachers learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Research design and approach

This section outlines the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategies, and data analysis used in the study where a mixed-methods design in the form of (QUAL + quant) was employed (Reid et al., 2014); taking a pragmatic philosophical view (Festl, 2021; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). The mixed method approach enabled confirmation of the information obtained through triangulation (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). In addition, the combination of the two approaches enables the development of the analysis framework which provides richer information (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Further, the quantitative aspect of the study will provide measurable patterns, trends and statistical validation to complement its qualitative aspect providing generalizability while enhancing thematic interpretation with statistical evidence. Nonetheless, the study was carried out in two circles in the first circle we collected data from fourteen teacher educators and in the second circle from the pre-service teachers. The two circles of data collection represent the first data collection phase in the longitudinal study of the foundation for the learning project. This data collection phase was conducted from August to December 2022.

Research objectives

This research study intends to achieve the following objectives as it explores the impacts of teacher educator's practices on pre-services teachers' experiences:

1. Examine various teaching practices and methodologies employed by educators in training pre-service teachers.
2. Determine how these practices affect pre-service teachers' experiences, development, and preparedness.

3. Provide recommendations for educators on improving their practices to better provide support and prepare pre-service teachers for their future careers.

Research questions

1. How do teacher educators' practices impact pre-service teachers' learning experiences?

2. How do pre-service teacher's learning experiences inform their pedagogical practices?

3. What teacher educator's practices can yield better outcomes for pre-service teacher's experiences?

Research participants

A total number of fourteen teacher educators and 108 pre-service teachers were involved in this research. Out of the selected pre-service teachers, 54 (27 females and 27 males) were selected from pre-primary pre-service teachers and 54 (27 females and 27 males) were selected from primary and pre-service teachers. Both sets of participants involved in this study were purposively selected (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Data collection procedures

Data were gathered at a time that was convenient for the research participants, during which both teacher educators and pre-service teachers completed questionnaires followed by interview sessions. Furthermore, all the selected teacher educators completed questionnaires followed by interview sessions. In addition, all the selected pre-service teachers filled out the questionnaires. Additionally, from this group, twenty student teachers were chosen for interviews based on their gender and courses they taken (i.e., pre-primary and primary). The questionnaires and the interviews for

both the teacher educators and the pre-service teachers were filled out using the CSEntry App. Both quantitative data from the questionnaires and qualitative data from the interviews were coded and uploaded to OneDrive for data security and organization.

Data analysis procedures

According to Nowell et al. (2017), qualitative data analysis involves identifying, assigning codes, organizing data into themes, describing and reporting themes generated from decontextualized, and recontextualized data. Therefore, qualitative data was thematically analyzed to obtain themes and sub-themes while the questionnaires were descriptively analyzed to obtain the percentages and frequencies. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and thereafter the transcripts were read through to obtain themes and sub-themes. Additionally, the information was categorized and organized into clusters of statements that conveyed consistent concepts. Next, an analysis of the data gathered for each theme and sub-theme was conducted. The quantitative data analysis was gathered through questionnaires and structured observations employing IBM SPSS software version 26 and Microsoft Excel to calculate descriptive statistics that generated tables and charts relevant to a particular parameter. The interpretation of the quantitative findings was conducted in accordance with the literature (Pallant, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section gives a summary of the results which answers the two stipulated research questions as follows:

Impact of teacher educators' practices on pre-service teachers' learning experiences

Most of the responses extracted from respondents indicated that pre-service teachers have had experience in teaching and learning strategies and the content learned. The majority of the pre-service student teachers who were involved in interviews, and who attended pre-primary education when they were young, highlighted learning strategies that were used by their pre-primary teachers to include songs, plays and games. Additionally, the pre-primary teachers noted that their teachers used teaching and learning materials to facilitate their learning and development of literacy skills (reading, writing and arithmetic). These experiences were evident in pre-service teachers' interview responses to a question that asked them about their pre-primary experiences: "...the experience I have had is teacher teaching practice using various activities like singing while learning how to write different letters of the alphabet and being able to pronounce letters" (ST 30).

The above response implies that pre-service teachers developed literacy skills when they were engaged in pre-primary learning through songs and games. This kind of experience forms a basic foundation which improves pre-service teachers' attitudes and opinions on aspects like lesson preparation and presentation skills (Kihwele & Mtandi, 2020). Additionally, the experiences increase pre-service teachers' general interest in teaching (Denuga & Nkengbeza, 2022; Paris et al., 2010). This is because it is not all pre-service teachers join teacher preparation programs out of the intrinsic motivation that comes from within (Feuer et al., 2013). The implication of this finding may inform the kind of strategies that pre-service teachers might be using when

engaged in real classroom practice just because they saw their teachers modelling.

Furthermore, the pre-service teachers admitted to being involved in teaching and learning, and other extra-curricular activities based on gender. The data on their experiences show how males and females are engaged in answering questions during the classroom teaching and learning process. Such strategies have been demonstrated by Al-Samarrai and Tamagnan (2020) to be successful in improving educational outcomes, especially for girls. In addition, pre-service teachers highlighted that they were involved in extracurricular activities such as sports, gardening, and general cleanliness. Their experiences explain that males and females were equitably engaged during classroom teaching and learning. This is because in any effort to address the factors that contribute to gender disparities in the implementation of teacher preparation curricula must adopt a diverse strategy since these factors are complex (Mrutu et al., 2022). There is hope that by growing a comparable strategy and learning from these experiences, education results can be greatly improved, and gender gaps can be closed (Al-Samarrai & Tamagnan, 2020). Likewise, in sports, some games and plays were specifically for males and females. This was evidenced through the pre-service teachers' responses during interviews as one commented:

My experience as a learner and the way our teachers treat males and females is as follows. First, we learn through sharing. For example, when the teachers formulate groups during teaching, they divide in a sense of equality. If males were five, females were also supposed to be five. Even in a seating arrangement, for example, the desk must seat three people, then there will be two males and one female. This can be the other way round based on the number of boys and girls in the class. (ST 84)

... in groups, our teachers divided the groups based on gender and group leaders were also chosen based on gender for example, if the chairman is male and then the secretary is female. So, the teachers considered gender in terms of learning, also all assignments were given based on gender equality, and we were also given advice for the benefit of all of us. (ST 82)

Notwithstanding, profound changes that are supporting the changing and diverse requirements of humankind are noted in teacher preparation programs. These changes are impacted by the reforms, which call for modifications to the structures that are now in place for the delivery of education (Campbell-Barr, 2017). Although the impact was noted not to be profound, F4L project interventions conducted had a significant impact on the teacher educators' practices which later influenced pre-service teachers' practice. This was perhaps because the project was still in its foundational stage when this study was undertaken. The impact of F4L interventions was evident by having a peek at the open-ended questions of a survey administered to teacher educators which indicated how the intervention impacted their practice and mentioned these practices, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The teacher educators' responses showed that the training they received from Aga Khan University has been very helpful and has transformed their instructional practice. Teacher educators stated to have great improvement in the implementation of gender-responsive pedagogy by 50%, curriculum interpretation and analysis by 37.5% and identification of students' needs for intervention by 37.5%. Besides, the results depict that teacher educators still need more professional assistance on the issues related to the development of quality and balanced tests as well as improvement in their pedagogical leadership skills. In the context of

this view, therefore, teacher educators are seen to have made a notable improvement in their instruction and pedagogical practice except in the aforementioned areas that still need intervention.

Similarly, some of the teacher educators' interview excerpts confirm the quantitative results as follows:

...I can now say that I have better knowledge in the three courses that I mentioned earlier. This has helped me due to the training that has been run at work by Aga Khan, they have helped us a lot in building and creating techniques that will increase our implementation and those that helped us, especially us who have not learnt about pre-primary education, through the workshops conducted recently, we got various instructional strategies and more knowledge to improve our teaching practice. (TE9)

Before the training, it was very hard as we used to rely on the summative examinations to assess our students. For instance, these days student teachers are more involved in practical activities than it was before. The daily practical activities help us to continuously assess them on the lesson content. Assessment has become part of teaching and learning, not waiting on the summative examination but rather from the beginning through practical activities. (TE4)

The results from the student teachers and teacher educators established that both the prior experiences from pre-primary and primary teachers and the experiences induced by the teacher educators have a great impact in shaping teacher educators' professional practices. This is why students' teachers should be involved in all steps of their learning process from the preparation, implementation and assessment stage (Kihwele & Mrandi, 2020). This is because pre-service teachers must demonstrate proficiency in time

management, subject content, teaching techniques, behavior control over students, personal attributes, and the use of teaching resources during actual classroom presentations to manage classroom teaching and other activities. In addition, the interaction between student teachers and teacher educators with the environment should involve a mentorship aspect that will enable their professional growth (Mpate et al., 2023). This interaction provides pre-service teachers with an environment where they can learn approaches, methods, strategies, and experiences that encourage them to develop and solidify their competencies.

How do pre-service teacher's learning experiences inform their pedagogical practices

Pre-service teachers' experiences contributed to the improvement of both their instructional and pedagogical practices. For instance, it was noted that there are experiences acquired by the pre-service teachers after engaging themselves within the teacher preparation program and those gained due to teacher educators' practices as seen in Table 1. Pre-service teachers admitted that they were very conversant in engaging themselves in various forms of students' motivations by 61.1% and identification of student's social-emotional development by 60.2%. About 62% of the pre-service teachers highlighted that they were conversant in applying different types of instructional strategies according to the needs and abilities of the learners. This is in line with the findings by Kihwele and Mtandi (2020), that student teachers' competencies in teaching are strengthened when they are engaged in the actual selection and application of instructional resources, designing of teaching and learning materials that are suitable for certain classes and for building learners competencies based on their

diversities. On the other hand, student teachers' ability to implement multiple teaching strategies requires to be given more attention as it was seen to be low. Instructional strategies that range from hands-on with locally made materials to the use of digital tools in teaching and learning ought to be the point of focus by the teacher educators (Paris et al., 2010). Moreover, other aspects of the pre-service teachers' instructional and pedagogical practices were seen to be moderately impacted by the experiences acquired.

Generally, the findings show that there is a need to give student teachers enough time for practice to enable them to consolidate their teaching skills. This is because student teachers' experiences are seen to be strengthened when exposed to the environment where practice is more than memorization kind of learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section gives the conclusion to the study findings and then presents the corresponding recommendations. The study concludes that pre-service teachers' experiences improved despite the study being conducted and reported within the short period after they joined the teacher education program. The conclusion goes with the assumption that pre-service teachers' experiences may continue to improve within the course of project implementation. The relationship between pre-service teachers and teacher educators strengthens the pre-service teachers' experiences which in turn improve their instructional and pedagogical practices. Teacher educators act as mentors and coaches to pre-service teachers by impacting them with good practices in both pre-primary and primary education. Pre-service teachers learn through experiences and gain various skills, knowledge, and competencies such as interpretation of

curriculum, lesson design, setting lesson objectives and goals as well as setting learners' learning outcomes. Furthermore, they gained experiences in measuring learners' competencies, creating a conducive learning environment, identifying the individual and social-emotional differences among individual learners and implementing various motivation skills. Moreover, the application of various instructional strategies based on learners' abilities, use of ICT and media in teaching and learning as well as identification of individual learners' special learning needs. Lastly, pre-service teachers gained experiences in the use of gender-responsive teaching methods, managing clouded classes, providing career guidance to learners as well as engaging learners in peer learning and support.

The study recommends that the host institution of the foundation for learning i.e., AKU-IED should continue to monitor the implementation of the knowledge acquired from the foundation for learning interventions by the teacher educators to continue to strengthen the pre-service teachers' experiences. The interventions should continue to encourage mentorship and coaching relationships between teacher educators and pre-service teachers to enable them to work together with one another for the maximization of the desired project and intervention outcomes. Further, a similar study should be conducted to assess how the pre-service teachers implement the gained instructional and pedagogical practice in real classroom settings.

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APPENDICES

Figure 1
Aspects of teacher educators' practices

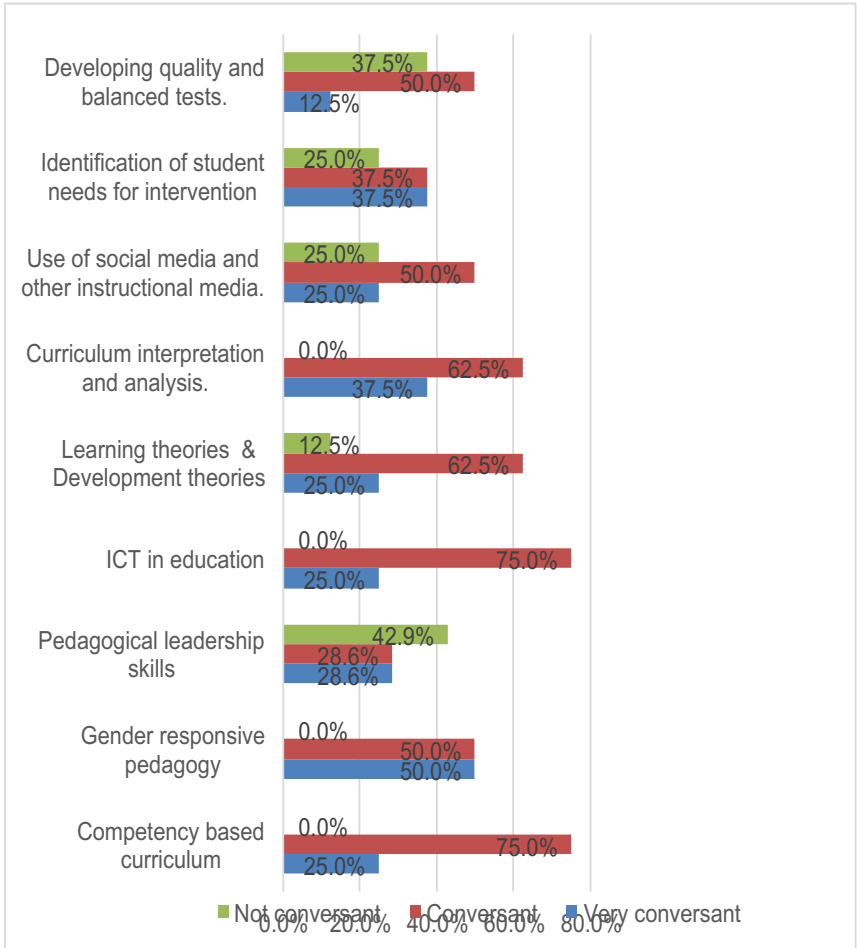


Table 1*Pre-service teachers improved instructional and pedagogical practices*

Aspect	Very conver-sant	Conver-sant	Not conver-sant at all
The interpretation and analysis of the curriculum to suit the teaching and learning needs of my class	50.0%	46.3%	3.7%
Lesson design	54.6%	42.6%	2.8%
Setting lesson objectives and goals	45.4%	47.2%	7.4%
Setting student learning outcomes	56.5%	41.7%	1.9%
Measuring student competencies	57.4%	42.6%	0.0%
Creating a learning-conducive classroom climate	55.6%	43.5%	0.9%
Identifying individual differences among students	42.6%	55.6%	1.9%
Identifying student's social and emotional development	60.2%	38.9%	0.9%
Engaging various forms of student motivation	61.1%	37.0%	1.9%
Applying different types of instructional strategies according to the ability of the learner (differentiated learning)	26.9%	62.0%	11.1%
Using ICT in a lesson	36.1%	59.3%	4.6%
Using media in a lesson	53.7%	45.4%	0.9%
Identifying learning difficulties in students	38.9%	54.6%	6.5%
Different communication styles among the students and between teacher and student (classroom discourse)	49.1%	46.3%	4.6%
Identifying students with special learning needs	42.6%	51.9%	5.6%
Integrating the learning styles of students with special learning needs in a lesson	38.0%	52.8%	9.3%
Using gender awareness and responsive teaching methods	38.0%	56.5%	5.6%
Managing a class with more than 80 students	29.6%	52.8%	17.6%
Providing career guidance to students	49.1%	46.3%	4.6%
Engaging peer review and peer support	28.7%	48.1%	23.1%

HARNESSING AI FOR ENHANCED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: INSIGHTS FROM SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

The study investigates the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in English language teaching among Senior High School teachers in Tanza, Cavite. Using a transcendental phenomenological approach, the research explores the lived experiences of ten English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and lesson plan analyses. The findings reveal that teachers employ various AI tools, such as Grammarly, Canva, Quillbot, and ChatGPT, to enhance personalized learning, provide immediate feedback, and create interactive learning materials. AI tools also support students with disabilities through features like automatic transcription and text-to-speech. However, challenges include connectivity issues, ethical concerns, and the risk of overdependence on AI. The study concludes that while AI can significantly enhance language learning by providing tailored educational experiences and fostering student engagement, it is crucial to address the digital divide and ensure ethical AI usage. Future studies could explore the impact of AI on language teaching in different educational contexts, particularly in private schools and higher education institutions, to gain a comprehensive understanding of its benefits and challenges.

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Keywords

Artificial intelligence (AI), language teaching, personalized learning, transcendental phenomenology, English teachers, Philippines

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The educational landscape has undergone significant transformations due to globalization demands and rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly in the context of disruptions created by the pandemic (Luengo-Oroz et al., 2021; Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 2018). In response, various countries are implementing strategic initiatives to equip future generations with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the digital era (Touretzky et al., 2019). Acknowledging the inevitability and exponential growth of AI, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has published important documents focused on AI curricula (UNESCO, 2022a), guidelines on AI and education (UNESCO, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c), as well as competency frameworks for both students (UNESCO, 2024a) and teachers (UNESCO, 2024b). These documents serve as indispensable guides for all AI initiatives, particularly in the fields of education and research.

The integration of AI in English Language Teaching (ELT) holds the potential to transform traditional educational structures (Ayala-Pazmiño & Alvarado-Lucas, 2023). Technological advancements in AI have enhanced accessibility and effectiveness in foreign language instruction. Jeon (2022) posits that the incorporation of AI-driven technologies, such as neural networks for speech recognition and machine learning, could revolutionize foreign language education. Furthermore, education professionals envision a future where administrative tasks are automated,

allowing students to learn at their own pace and facilitating a more efficient and accessible educational system.

In the Philippines, AI has the capacity to address educational challenges, thereby enhancing accessibility and efficacy. De La Salle University - Dasmariñas (2023) emphasizes its commitment to the UN's advocacy for equitable access to high-quality education and ongoing learning opportunities. This can be achieved through a comprehensive program that prioritizes academic success, social awareness, and personal growth, ultimately preparing students to become responsible and engaged citizens in an AI-driven world. Moreover, the Department of Education (DepEd) undersecretary Epimaco Densing III, during discussions about the proposed 2024 budget, noted that the administration is actively exploring alternative approaches to mitigate the issue of insufficient classrooms in public schools (Begas, 2023). This includes looking at technology, particularly AI, as a possible solution. One advantage of AI language models is their ability to support asynchronous learning, which Li and Xing (2021) found enhances student engagement by allowing them to ask questions and engage in discussions at their convenience. Additionally, Pérez et al. (2020), and Smutny and Schreiberova (2020) observed that conversational AIs are widely accepted in language education due to their ability to motivate learners.

The successful integration of AI tools in language education requires careful consideration of linguistic, cultural, and ethical factors. By examining emerging trends in AI and evaluating their suitability for educational contexts, educators can develop effective and culturally appropriate AI-driven interventions (Dalan, 2023). However, access to AI resources remains a challenge, particularly for schools and communities with limited financial means (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2021). An analysis of the disparities and limitations

of AI integration in Philippine education reveals that while AI has the potential to transform education, its implementation faces significant obstacles.

AI tools for English language learning

Integrating AI with English language studies—including literature, linguistics, and cultural courses—can significantly enhance language proficiency. This approach allows students to engage with the subject matter in English, thereby improving their language learning effectiveness (Chen & Yuan, 2022). Estrellado and Miranda (2023) report a comprehensive compilation of digital tools and resources available to teachers and students in academic settings. These AI technologies can enhance the efficiency and customization of the educational process through various materials, such as e-learning platforms, digital pinboards, collaborative tools, and lesson planning software.

In addition, popular search engines like Google have become key research instruments for both educators and students. According to Tsai (2022), 94% of teachers indicate that their students primarily associate research with Google usage. Beyond traditional resources, learning can be reinforced with digital tools, such as flashcard generators, educational quiz programs like Quizlet, citation generators, plagiarism checkers, copywriting tools, and virtual assistants, all of which provide interactive support. These resources immerse learners and educators in vast knowledge, facilitating innovative teaching practices that reshape traditional instruction.

Geng et al. (2021) assert that AI integration in language learning requires educators' endorsement and the development of effective instructional strategies. For instance, in higher education, educators might utilize tools like

Grammarly as AI assistants alongside high-quality teaching materials. This integration allows for more informed revisions and a deeper understanding of the material. Additionally, students commonly use QuillBot, another AI tool designed to help avoid plagiarism through effective paraphrasing options (Fitria, 2021). Chun (2020) emphasizes that AI presents new opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching effectiveness, streamlining labor-intensive tasks like manual grading and allowing a focus on personalized instruction.

Advantages of using AI in English language learning

Given the global significance of English, particularly in regions where it is not the primary language, AI integration in English education is seen as a transformative moment in enhancing student engagement and teacher effectiveness (Dewi et al., 2021). AI assists teachers in providing personalized lessons, managing student progress, and assessing performance (LLS English, 2023). Additionally, AI can foster the development of various language skills through a range of exercises tailored to reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Ramdhani, 2021).

To create a personalized learning environment, the educational process must be tailored to meet each student's unique needs and capabilities. The AIContentfy team (2025) highlights that this involves leveraging data and insights to craft customized learning experiences that align with individual learning styles, preferences, and interests. Active involvement of stakeholders, including educators, is crucial throughout the development and implementation stages of AI in education (Langran et al., 2020; Qin et al., 2020).

Challenges faced by teachers using AI in English language learning

The foundational technologies of AI are under rigorous scrutiny. While some educators demonstrate enthusiasm for integrating AI, others express reluctance or anxiety (Chen & Yuan, 2022; Eslit, 2023; Fabro et al., 2024; Giray et al., 2024; Herminigildo et al., 2023; Obenza et al., 2023). There is a concern that overreliance on AI may hinder the development of critical and creative thinking skills (Santiago et al., 2023). Large Language Models (LLMs), generated from extensive textual data, encapsulate established language patterns, but they may also propagate biases present in their data sources (Brady et al., 2023), which can lead to misinformation or *hallucinations* (Crawford, 2023).

Fear surrounding AI's implications—particularly its potential effects on foreign language communication skills, including body language and expression—has also surfaced among educators (Amaral & Meurer, 2011). The Philippines faces significant challenges, such as insufficient internet access, digital literacy issues, and technology gaps, especially in rural areas, impeding equitable AI adoption in education. Ethical concerns regarding privacy, bias, and transparency pose risks for marginalized groups and could compromise student data security (Dalan, 2023). Despite the various AI tools available—such as chatbots, machine translation, bidirectional text-to-speech systems, and writing aids (Jiang et al., 2021)—important ethical considerations must be taken into account. The complex landscape of AI in education necessitates that instructors be acutely aware of their roles in protecting student welfare as they navigate the integration of evolving technologies (Melo, 2023). English teachers are particularly concerned about

the rapid expansion of AI and the absence of ethical guidelines governing its use.

Consequently, the adoption of AI is hindered by its susceptibility to misuse, including the potential for learners to exploit AI for unethical purposes. Although the integration of AI in education presents both advantages and challenges, it is essential for language educators to thoroughly understand these dynamics to prepare for future developments. Hockly (2023) explored the current applications of AI in ELT, examining the potential benefits and obstacles that AI poses for learners, educators, and educational institutions. Instances of malevolent misuse of AI also present significant risks (Hagendorff, 2020).

While AI promises to enhance English language learning experiences, it is vital to acknowledge and rectify existing gaps and limitations to ensure equitable inclusion in the Philippine educational framework. English language teachers must demonstrate advanced competencies that embrace cultural and linguistic diversity while fostering interconnectedness through globalization. Educational institutions must prioritize integrating AI-powered tools and resources into curricula and teaching methods to harness AI's transformational potential (Umali, 2024). Studies reveal readiness among educators to integrate digital resources after attending technological literacy seminars (Geng et al., 2021). Local studies show positive perceptions of generative AI tools among teachers and students (Arguson et al., 2023; Prestoza & Bantao, 2024).

Previous research predominantly focused on the technologies utilized in foreign language teaching and the engagement of students with AI tools, often overlooking senior high school education and the perspectives of Filipino language teachers. This study aimed to fill that gap, serving as a valuable resource for language learners and teachers to

promote responsible and intentional AI utilization, ultimately fostering a dynamic and student-centered learning environment that prepares learners for success in an AI-driven future.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the use of AI by Senior High School English teachers in Tanza, Cavite. The central question was: “How have English language teachers integrated AI into language learning?”

Research questions

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-research inquiries:

1. What were the AI tools employed by Senior High School educators to facilitate language learning?
2. How did language educators incorporate AI into their pedagogical practices?

Methods

Transcendental phenomenology was employed as the research methodology, following the approach of Moustakas (1994). This qualitative research focused on the lived experiences of teachers and their use of AI tools in ELT. The researchers explored the internal process of awareness, focusing on the patterns and interactions between phenomena and the individual. Moustakas (1994) outlined a systematic process for analyzing phenomenological data. Co-researchers shared their personal experiences, and the researchers identified significant statements, grouped them into meaningful units, and categorized them into themes. These

themes were then combined to create a comprehensive description of the co-researchers' experiences, including textual and structural descriptions.

Participants in the study

The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that individuals with direct knowledge and experiences of the phenomena are carefully chosen and included in the study. To gain a comprehensive understanding of individuals' life experiences, it is necessary to select participants from a homogeneous sample (Alase, 2017). Purposive sampling was utilized, with specific criteria set to identify the co-researchers. The criterion-based selection included: (1) Regular English language teachers who have been teaching for at least two years in Senior High public schools; (2) English teachers from three Senior High Schools in the Municipality of Tanza, namely Tanza National Trade School, Amaya School of Home Industries, and Tanza National Comprehensive High School; and (3) Language teachers who use AI tools to support language teaching.

In accordance with Moustakas' framework, the researchers adopted the term 'co-researchers' to refer to participants, as they were integral to comprehending the fundamental nature of the phenomenon alongside the researchers. The researchers' primary goal was to make the co-researchers aware of their status and role. Ten co-researchers were chosen and labeled with numbers (C1-C10) to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Data collection

Data were collected from individuals who experienced the phenomenon under investigation. In phenomenological studies, data collection typically involves multiple in-depth

interviews with participants until data saturation is achieved. This research included 10 co-researchers, reflecting a participant size generally ranging from 2 to 25, which is standard in phenomenological research. The selection of these participants aimed to capture the homogeneity of the sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The researchers allocated four weeks for data collection, employing in-person or online interviews through Zoom. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a series to ensure data saturation. A research protocol consisting of ten questions and ten follow-up questions was prepared to guide the semi-structured interview process. Prior to the main interviews, the researchers conducted pre-interviews to assess the willingness and openness of potential participants. Informed consent was obtained and signed by all co-researchers, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and the audio recordings served as a repository of research material for further analysis.

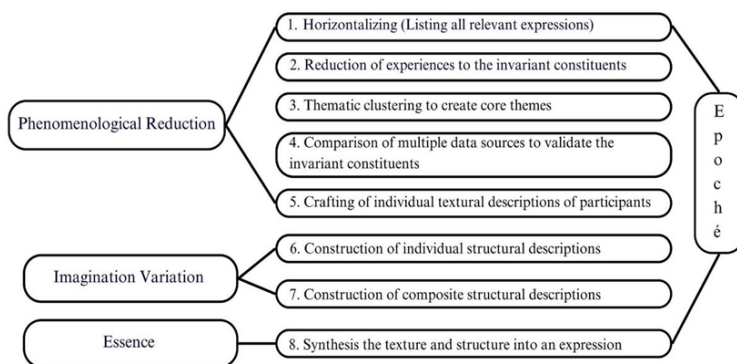
Classroom observations were conducted with each language teacher co-researcher, focusing on the AI tools and applications used during instruction. Additionally, lesson plans that incorporated Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and AI tools were reviewed. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, data triangulation was utilized, combining information from interviews, observations, and document analysis of lesson plans. Validation and cross-checking of the transcriptions were carried out in collaboration with the co-researchers to ensure accuracy and reliability in the findings.

Data analysis

In light of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology, eight steps (Fig. 1) were followed in data analysis.

Figure 1

Steps in phenomenological analysis



The epoché represents bracketing the researchers' subjective feelings. Data included verbatim transcripts of interviews analyzed continuously, allowing insights from initial interviews to inform later ones.

1. Horizontalizing: The interview transcripts were reviewed, highlighting significant statements related to AI usage by language teachers. This step involved discarding personal judgments and redundancy to focus on unique horizons.

2. Reduction of experiences to invariant constituents: Insignificant statements were filtered out, retaining only those experiences relevant to AI usage in language teaching. These significant statements were then clustered into meaningful themes, each characterized by a singular meaning.

3. Thematic clustering to create core themes: The invariant constituents, or horizons, were thematized and

clustered to identify the core themes reflective of participants' experiences.

4. Comparison of multiple data sources to validate the invariant constituents: Themes from participant interviews were compared with observations to ensure accuracy and consistency across data sources.

5. Crafting individual textural descriptions of participants: Verbatim excerpts from co-researchers' interviews were used to describe their experiences in a narrative format, enhancing clarity and comprehension.

6. Construction of individual structural descriptions: This step focused on integrating textural descriptions with imaginative variation to develop a personal understanding of how experiences occurred.

7. Construction of composite structural descriptions: Textural descriptions were woven into a unified structure to explain how collective experiences unfolded, with each paragraph concluding with a structural analysis.

8. Synthesis of texture and structure into an expression: Narratives were prepared for each participant, capturing "what" occurred and "how" it happened. Common units of meaning were synthesized into composite descriptions, merging textural and structural insights to portray the essence of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ensuring trustworthiness in data interpretation was essential to providing valuable insights from the research. The findings were validated to accurately reflect the co-researchers' intended meanings, minimizing researcher bias. To enhance credibility, the study employed

prolonged engagement, persistent observation, data triangulation, and peer debriefing for external evaluation. Additionally, referential adequacy was achieved by comparing initial findings with original data, and supplementary materials, including documents and field notes, were maintained separately for context and future reference. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, including data collection from interviews and class observations. Interviews with participants were conducted at different times to assess consistency. The phenomenological analysis began with epoché, where researchers suspended preconceived notions.

Moreover, member checking allowed participants to review initial findings and verify authenticity through verbatim files. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the phenomenon studied: the experiences of Senior High School language teachers in Tanza, Cavite, using AI tools during the 2022-2023 academic year. In terms of dependability, this was ensured by involving an independent researcher to assess consistency in findings and clearly delineating study processes. Confirmability focused on accurately representing co-researchers' responses rather than researcher perspectives. An external audit by an independent researcher verified that conclusions were based on collected data and ensured reflexivity throughout the research process. Finally, the Epoché process was consistently applied from horizontalizing to synthesizing findings, with documentation maintained at each stage, including an audit trail of lesson plans and observational analysis.

Ethical considerations

To ensure ethical research, procedures were implemented to safeguard the well-being of participants.

Following De La Salle University Dasmariñas ethical protocols and DepEd guidelines, teacher co-researchers and school heads were provided with written consent forms. These forms informed them about the study’s goal and obtained their consent. Participation was voluntary, and signatures were required to validate their consent. Participants were assured that all findings would be treated with the highest level of confidentiality, ensuring their identities were not disclosed, particularly during data transcription. They were also given copies of the transcriptions. Numerical participant labeling was employed to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Participants felt at ease during the interviews, as their schedules, interview preferences, and desired locations were considered. Respect for their responses was maintained at all times.

RESULTS

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the findings derived from the data gathered. Core themes, textual, structural, and composite descriptions of teachers’ experiences corresponding to the study’s two specific research questions were developed and presented using tables. Table 1 shows the core themes on the AI tools employed by Senior High School educators to facilitate language learning.

Table 1.
Core themes of English teachers’ integration of AI tools to facilitate language teaching

Core Themes	Description
T1 AI for Personalized Learning	Analyzing learners’ strengths and weaknesses to tailor lesson plans and provide individualized feedback.

T2	AI for Adaptive Learning Platforms	Adjusting content difficulty based on learner progress to enhance engagement and effectiveness.
T3	AI for Automated Assessments and Grading	Utilizing language assessment, automated grading, and interactive language practice activities.
T4	AI for Virtual Assistants	Integrating AI chatbots or virtual tutors for instant feedback, language practice, and answering questions.
T5	AI for Language Learning Applications	Developing AI-driven mobile apps for immersive experiences like real-time translation, pronunciation correction, and cultural insights.
T6	AI for Data-driven Insights	Leveraging AI to analyze learning data, identify patterns, and optimize teaching strategies.
T7	AI for Gamification and Simulation	Creating AI-powered language games and simulations for engaging and interactive learning.
T8	AI for Content Creation and Curation	Using AI to generate learning materials, curate authentic resources, and create personalized learning pathways.
T9	AI for Accessibility and Inclusivity	Implementing AI technologies to support learners with disabilities, offering features like automatic transcription, translation, and text-to-speech.
T10	Ethical and Cultural Considerations in AI Usage	Addressing ethical concerns in AI use, promoting cultural sensitivity, and ensuring responsible integration.

Table 1 shows the ten core themes related to the use of AI in English language teaching. These themes included personalized learning (co-researchers 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10), creativity enhancement (all co-researchers), automated assessment (all co-researchers), instant feedback (co-researchers 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10), immersive experiences (co-researchers 1, 2, 5, and 9), data analysis and optimization (co-researchers 3, 4, and 5), interactive learning (co-researchers 2 and 3), personalized learning pathways (all co-researchers), accessibility for students with disabilities (co-researchers 6, 8, and 9), and various challenges (all co-researchers). Table 2 shows the textual descriptions of the AI tools

employed by Senior High School educators to facilitate language learning.

Table 2.

Textural descriptions of English teachers' experience using AI tools to facilitate language teaching

Participant	Textural Descriptions
C1	Grammarly, Canva, Quillbot, and other paraphrasing tools employed in teaching English resulted in idea generation and customization of teaching materials.
C2	Quillbot, Grammarly, Talkpal, and Perplexity were the AI tools incorporated in teaching, checking of grammar, structure and content of both lessons and students' outputs, while B-bytes and Trichea were used for interactive games.
C3	Grammarly, Canva, ChatGPT, Curipod, ELSA Speak, Invideo, SlidesGo, DALLE-E, and Perplexity generated interactive learning and created personalized teaching resources and assessments.
C4	Grammarly, Canva, TalkPal, and ChatGPT were employed in composition, proofreading, and language structures.
C5	Murf Ai, Curipod, Quillbot, Parlay Genie, Character AI, Canva, and Grammarly were used in synthesizing and data source evaluation.
C6	Canva, ChatGPT, Co-Pilot, and Quillbot were the AI tools employed in facilitating teaching, adapting lessons, and customization of lesson plans.
C7	Grammarly, Kahoot, ChatGPT, and Turnitin were the incorporated AI tools in teaching, data gathering, and writing assistance.
C8	Canva, ChatGPT, and Quillbot incorporated with translating tools, content and idea generators.
C9	Grammarly, Quillbot, and Plagiarism Checker facilitated language assessments, evaluating student performance and automated grammar checkers.
C10	ChatGPT, Co-pilot, Grammarly, Copyleaks, Get Pronounced, Canva Image Generator, and other phonological applications were used.

Table 2 lists the AI tools used by Senior High School teachers, the co-researchers. They utilized various AI tools to enhance language teaching. Grammarly, Canva, Quillbot, and Perplexity were employed for personalized learning and lesson creation. AI chatbots and virtual language tutors offered instant feedback, language practice, and answering questions. Adaptive learning platforms like Parlay Genie adjusted content difficulty based on student progress. These tools were integrated into lesson plans to supplement

classroom instruction and support self-directed learning. Specifically, co-researchers 1, 2, and 8 used AI to assist in lesson planning, analyzing learner strengths and weaknesses, and tailoring instruction accordingly. Co-researcher 3’s lesson plan incorporated Grammarly for engagement activities. AI-driven mobile applications like TalkPal, ELSA Speak, Get Pronounced, and AI translators were used for real-time translation and pronunciation correction. Co-researcher 4 used TalkPal to enhance students’ conversational skills, and Canva Write was used for visual representation in lesson plans.

Interactive platforms like Kahoot, B-bytes, ELSA Speak, Get Pronounced, and Talkpal offered engaging lessons, vocabulary drills, and language practice exercises. Parlay Genie, observed in some classrooms, adapted material difficulty in real-time, fostering student interest and performance. These applications were integrated into lesson plans to supplement classroom instruction and support self-directed learning.

Table 3 shows the structural descriptions of the AI tools employed by Senior High School educators to facilitate language learning.

Table 3.

Structural descriptions of English teachers’ experience using AI tools to facilitate language teaching

Participant	Structural Descriptions
C1	Incorporating Grammarly, Canva, and Quillbot for language teaching, tailoring lessons, and authenticating teaching materials for idea generation, grammar checking, and phrase construction, despite connectivity challenges.
C2	Integrating AI tools like Quillbot, Grammarly, Talkpal, and Perplexity to improve grammatical accuracy, structural integrity, and content quality, emphasizing accelerated revision and individualized feedback without reducing human interaction.

- C3 Employing Grammarly, Canva, ChatGPT, Curipod, ELSA Speak, Invideo, SlidesGo, DALL-E, and Perplexity to enhance language learning, promote active participation, and create personalized materials and evaluations.
 - C4 Using automatic transcription and text-to-speech functions with TalkPal, Grammarly, ChatGPT, and PDF Tender for special needs students, and Canva for visual reinforcement.
 - C5 Integrating Murf AI, Curipod, Quillbot, Parlay Genie, Character AI, Canva, and Grammarly for exploring literary themes, synthesizing material, grammar checking, and evaluating sources, while emphasizing responsible use.
 - C6 Employing Quillbot, Canva, ChatGPT, and Co-Pilot to create a dynamic classroom, balancing traditional and modern methods, improving preparation, resources, and information access, while considering misuse and resource availability.
 - C7 Creating activities to improve writing accuracy and plagiarism evaluation using Grammarly, Kahoot!, ChatGPT, and Turnitin.
 - C8 Using Canva, ChatGPT, and Quillbot to enhance reading and writing instruction, translation, and content conceptualization, motivating students while acknowledging gadget availability.
 - C9 Integrating Grammarly, Quillbot, and Plagiarism Checker for participatory and self-directed learning, providing immediate feedback, discovering writing styles, and promoting ethical composition, with a need for training.
 - C10 Using ChatGPT, Co-pilot, Grammarly, Copyleaks, Get Pronounced, and Canva Image Generator for real-time translation, pronunciation correction, specialized examples, grammar correction, and engaging multimedia resources, without over-reliance
-

Co-researchers utilized a variety of AI tools to enhance language teaching. Grammarly was used for writing assistance, Canva for visual resources, TalkPal, ELSA Speak, Get Pronounced, and AI translators for phonological applications, Quillbot for paraphrasing, and Turnitin for plagiarism detection. These tools were integrated into lesson plans to create personalized learning experiences, foster creativity, and support student development. While leveraging AI, educators balanced efficiency with the integrity of student learning, addressing challenges related to technology accessibility and preventing over-reliance on AI.

Co-researchers 6, 8, and 9 emphasized the importance of availability and connectivity to AI technologies. Gadgets such as laptops with good technical specifications and cell-phones are essential not only in classrooms but also in

students' households. Additionally, there is a scarcity of DepEd-sponsored seminars on navigating and using various AI tools and applications for language learning.

Table 3 highlights the importance of teaching students about the misuse, overuse, and abuse of AI applications. During classroom observations, teachers emphasized ethical usage, addressing concerns around AI in language education, promoting equal opportunities, and ensuring responsible AI integration. This was particularly evident with Co-researcher 2 and Co-researcher 6, as shown in the transcripts below:

Co-researcher 2: “Incorporating AI to language teaching can actually lead to, of course, less humanized experience, depth of human interaction, the students can actually depend much on the use of AI, and of course AI could be costly, in terms of subscription.”

Co-researcher 6: “Honestly, I believe we have a lot of concerns with AI. It’s something that I use myself because I’d rather have them really use it than me feeling betrayed because I have no awareness that they’re actually using it. It’s inevitable, so might as well just integrate it in the class. But really, in my context, I still am very skeptical with the presence of AI right now, honestly. Despite all the benefits that I told you earlier, I think it’s very predatory, I must say.”

Co-researcher 10: “I think the number one challenge here is there are students who cannot use AI properly. They tend to search everything for AI and then just copy and paste it. There’s a lot of AI tools that are really free, accessible. However, don’t rely much on that particular AI. I’m always telling my students that AI is just a guide, AI is a trainer, but don’t use or see AI as a teacher.”

Box 1 presents the composite descriptions, combining the textural and structural descriptions of the AI tools

employed by Senior High School educators to facilitate language learning.

Box 1

Composite descriptions of English teachers of ai tools employed to facilitate language teaching

Language teachers employed AI to develop language learning materials, gather authentic resources, and customize learning paths to meet each student's individualized needs, while also incorporating traditional methods. AI is crucial for analyzing students' proficiency and areas for improvement, providing immediate translation, and offering accurate pronunciation correction and feedback. AI chatbots evaluate linguistic expression, assign scores automatically, and provide interactive learning. Additionally, AI facilitates text-to-speech and transcription for students with disabilities, identifies trends, and promotes gamification and simulation.

Co-researchers highlight the benefits of AI technology in learning language skills and emphasize its appropriate application. Both educational institutions and students' households need access to high-quality smartphones and laptops. The Department of Education (DepEd) should provide instructors with training on AI applications and language learning technology, as well as students with instruction on the ethical use of AI. AI efficiently assesses the language, structure, and content of both student and class work

Language teachers use AI to enhance learning by providing customized examples, correcting grammar, ensuring academic integrity, and creating visual aids. AI tools offer real-time translation and pronunciation correction, creating immersive experiences. In advanced classrooms, students benefit from abundant digital resources and uninterrupted internet access.

Box 1 shows how AI enhances language learning with automatic grammar checks, improving writing skills, and providing prompt feedback. It helps avoid plagiarism through paraphrase assistance, fostering ethical writing practices. These tools create a collaborative and autonomous learning environment, improving lesson planning, presentation materials, and information retrieval. Educators balance efficiency with maintaining authenticity and quality in student learning. Addressing technology accessibility, proper utilization, educator training, and avoiding

overdependence on AI is crucial to enhancing the learning environment.

Table 4 shows the textual descriptions of English teachers' experiences in terms of integrating AI in language teaching.

Table 4

Textual descriptions of language educators in incorporating AI into their pedagogical practices

Participant	Structural Descriptions
C1	Using AI to produce personalized learning materials, curate authentic resources, and customize learning alongside traditional assessment methods.
C2	Integrating AI language games, simulations, and other AI tools to create formative and summative evaluations.
C3	Incorporating AI tools to create individualized lessons and assessments tailored to students' learning capacity, style, and progression.
C4	Incorporating AI tools for writing composition, proofreading, language structure enhancement, visual concept production, automatic transcription, translation, and text-to-speech.
C5	Leveraging AI for language evaluation through interactive exercises, question construction, paraphrasing, and grammar checking.
C6	Employing AI in lesson plans, feedback, and developing interactive content alongside traditional teaching methods.
C7	Using AI for data collection, writing, grammatical accuracy, interactive learning, and originality verification.
C8	Embracing translator and visual idea generator AI tools in teaching reading and writing skills while preserving traditional methods.
C9	Utilizing AI for writing assignments, assessments, paraphrasing, writing structures, and plagiarism checking, reinforcing conventional strategies.
C10	Employing AI to customize lessons, edit outputs, and create formative assessments while using traditional summative evaluations.

Table 4 illustrates how English teachers integrated AI in language teaching. Co-researchers extensively integrated AI tools into their language teaching practices, utilizing them for various purposes. These tools included AI-generated materials, curated resources, and personalized learning pathways. Classroom observations revealed the effective use of AI for individual and group needs, such as automated writing evaluations, personalized rubrics, and intelligent

tutoring systems. AI also supported learners with disabilities through features like transcription and text-to-speech.

Additionally, co-researchers employed AI for language assessment, automated grading, and interactive practice activities, such as virtual language assistants and computerized dynamic assessments. These integrations enhanced the precision and depth of grammar, structure, and content in student work. Specifically, co-researchers 1 and 2 used AI to generate materials and curate resources. Co-researcher 1 used Canva for assessments and personalized rubrics, while Co-researcher 2 leveraged Grammarly and Quillbot for grammar feedback.

Co-researchers 2, 4, and 10 integrated AI tools into intelligent tutoring systems, with Co-researcher 2 demonstrating their effectiveness in enhancing writing abilities. Co-researchers 4 and 9 used AI to support learners with disabilities, with Co-researcher 4 using Transcribe AI for transcription and Co-researcher 9 adjusting font sizes. Co-researchers 3 and 5 incorporated AI tools for speech recognition and chatbots, with Co-researcher 5 using Murf AI for voiceovers.

Co-researchers 6, 7, and 8 used ChatGPT and other virtual language assistants for various purposes, including idea generation, language practice, and answering learner questions. Co-researcher 2 used AI tools like Grammarly and Quizzes for assessments, while Co-researcher 10 used ChatGPT and Co-pilot to generate specific questions and organize AI-generated ideas.

Meanwhile, Table 5 presents the structural descriptions of English teachers' experiences in terms of integrating AI in language teaching.

Table 5***Structural descriptions of language educators in incorporating AI into their pedagogical practices.***

Participant	Structural Descriptions
C1	Incorporating AI tools and applications into pedagogical practices for teaching English for Academic and Professional Purposes involves generating language learning materials, curating authentic resources, and creating personalized learning pathways for lessons, despite the challenge of data connectivity in schools.
C2	Incorporating AI tools in teaching Practical Research to check grammar, structure, and content of lessons and student outputs, and creating AI-powered language games and simulations for more engaging and interactive learning.
C3	Incorporating AI tools in teaching Practical Research to create personalized materials and assessments that adjust content difficulty based on learner progress, enhancing engagement and effectiveness through dynamic and interactive learning.
C4	Incorporating AI tools in teaching English for Academic and Professional Purposes to aid in composition, proofreading, and language structure checks, supporting individual student needs and learners with disabilities through features like automatic transcription, translation, and text-to-speech.
C5	Incorporating AI tools in teaching 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World for language assessment, automated grading, and interactive language practice activities to enhance student skills.
C6	Incorporating AI in teaching Creative Nonfiction to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses, tailor lesson plans, and provide individualized feedback, while considering ethical concerns in AI use for language education.
C7	Incorporating AI in teaching Practical Research for data gathering, language practice, and writing compositions, aiding in answering learner questions while ensuring responsible AI integration.
C8	Incorporating AI in teaching Reading and Writing Skills using translator and visual idea generator tools, while addressing concerns about overdependence.
C9	Incorporating AI in teaching Practical Research for data analysis, pattern identification, and optimizing teaching strategies. This includes creating assessments and using grammar checkers for instant feedback on student outputs.
C10	Incorporating AI in teaching Oral Communication in Context using phonological applications to enhance speaking abilities, offering immersive experiences like real-time translation and pronunciation correction.

Table 5 shows how AI tools were used in language education. Co-researchers modified instructional content based

on learner performance, using AI to provide tailored learning experiences. For subjects like English for Academic and Professional Purposes and Creative Nonfiction, co-researchers 3, 4, 5, and 7 found Curipod and other AI tools helpful for collaborative lesson creation, sharing, and generating interactive activities. In Practical Research, co-researchers 2 and 7 integrated AI tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Turnitin into the curriculum, emphasizing responsible AI use. Co-researchers 7 and 8 used translator and visual idea generator tools to enhance Reading and Writing skills, though they expressed concerns about dependency. Co-researcher 10 used AI to analyze learner performance and identify effective instructional tactics for speaking practice. Learner-generated context-based AI tools provided one-on-one tutoring and immediate feedback for phonological exercises, used by co-researchers 2, 4, and 10 in teaching Oral Communication.

Despite efforts to integrate AI tools, co-researchers faced challenges. Co-researcher 1 noted connectivity issues, co-researcher 6 encountered ethical concerns, co-researcher 7 focused on teaching responsible AI use, and co-researcher 8 feared overdependence on these tools.

Co-researcher 1: “We do not have a wide internet connection for our particular lessons and then students also as well, do not have internet in accessing their outputs, so those have internet so they could be able to use those AI tool, but those do not have, then they could.”

Co-researcher 6: “It is hard to detect if the student is the genuine writer or maker of ones’ world. . . transparency is hard. Too much accessibility is dangerous if not inside the school, then outside, there is a danger in identity theft and all.”

Co-researcher 7: “. . . we might as well integrate tools that are necessary for them to be equipped. I think it helps

them be more familiar, helps them gain some access. But I think we really need to find a way as to how to regulate it for the responsible usage.”

Co-researcher 8: “Overreliance or overdependence on these AI tools of the students, because it is easy for them to use Quillbot or any other tools that can make their work easier. Some of them will not synthesize or analyze and try on their own. That’s one claim. Maybe that is why other teachers may not allow the use of AI tools in their subject, any subject they teach, not just in English.”

Box 2

Composite descriptions of language educators in incorporating AI into their pedagogical practice

Integrating AI in teaching English for Academic and Professional Purposes, Practical Research, 21st Century Literature, Creative Nonfiction, Reading and Writing Skills, and Oral Communication involves a complex interplay of technology, pedagogy, and learner engagement. Personalized AI-driven environments enhance language learning by tailoring experiences to individual trajectories. Adaptive systems adjust task difficulty, feedback, and content. Speech recognition technology improves pronunciation and listening skills, providing immediate feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and phonetic precision. These tools significantly increase spoken language practice with real-time corrections and recommendations, often not possible in traditional classrooms due to time constraints or teacher availability. However, challenges include connectivity issues, ethical usage, responsible information sharing, and fear of overdependence.

Box 2 highlights the use of AI in collaborative English language learning to tailor instruction and assessments, support written and spoken communication, shape class content, and develop materials. Personalized AI-driven environments enhance learning by customizing experiences to individual paths. Adaptive systems adjust task difficulty, feedback, and content presentation to meet learners’ needs. AI technologies analyze vast linguistic data, providing educators with insights into student progress and areas for improvement. Data analytics and machine learning help identify performance patterns, personalize learning pathways, and offer targeted interventions.

In collaborative research, teachers use AI to tailor instruction and assessments, support communication, shape content, and develop materials. AI-driven environments enhance learning by customizing experiences to individual paths. Adaptive systems adjust tasks, feedback, and content to suit learners' needs. AI-powered tools also promote collaborative learning through virtual classrooms with chatbots and editing tools, fostering peer interaction, problem-solving, and knowledge sharing. These environments enhance linguistic skills and critical competencies like critical thinking, communication, and teamwork. However, challenges include data connectivity and ethical, responsible tool usage, such as avoiding overdependence.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that language instructors integrated AI to augment traditional teaching approaches. AI was used to create materials, curate resources, and personalize learning paths. It evaluated students, offered translations, and provided feedback on speech, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, AI systems assisted in language assessment and provided interactive instruction. Teachers also employed text-to-speech and transcription technologies, particularly to support learners with disabilities. AI was integrated into various areas, including lesson plans, language assessments, data analysis, composition, proofreading, and language structure checking. The development of speaking abilities and content adaptation were emphasized. While co-researchers highlighted the importance of appropriate AI integration, they also noted challenges such as connectivity issues, misuse, overuse, and abuse of applications; unavailability of gadgets and resources; irresponsible AI tool usage; incorrect acknowledgment of sources; insufficient

training and seminars; a less humanized teaching experience; fear of predatory use; and concerns regarding transparency and information sharing.

AI tools employed to facilitate language learning

Interviews with 10 English teachers revealed the use of conventional teaching methods alongside AI technologies, emphasizing the importance of proficiency in AI tools as highlighted by UNESCO (2022b). AI supports asynchronous learning, allowing students to learn at their own pace, thereby increasing engagement and collaboration (Li & Xing, 2021).

Teachers who incorporated AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, and Bing Chat significantly improved language teaching by providing feedback and language practice, potentially transforming traditional educational structures (Ayala-Pazmiño & Alvarado-Lucas, 2023). Quillbot, Murf AI, and Perplexity facilitated personalized learning and lesson creation, while Canva and DALLE-E supported visual learners with tailored lesson plans and individualized feedback. Turnitin, Plagiarism Checker, and Copyleaks ensured academic integrity, and Grammarly provided comprehensive grammar checks, editing, and proofreading. Platforms like Parlay Genie adapted content difficulty based on learner progress.

The integration of AI into language learning requires teacher support and tailored teaching strategies (Geng et al., 2021). AI tools like Canva Write and Character AI analyzed learning data, identified patterns, and optimized teaching strategies. Engaging tools like B-bytes, Curipod, and Kahoot! introduced interactive language games and simulations, making learning more enjoyable and effective. Virtual reality simulations enabled students to interact with

native speakers, hone conversational abilities, and explore different cultures (AIContentfy, 2025). Conversational AIs motivated learners to engage in language settings (Pérez et al., 2020; Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020). For transcription, translation, and pronunciation needs, TalkPal and Get Pronounced offered automatic and real-time solutions, especially for those with speech difficulties.

Incorporating AI into language pedagogical practices

AI was integrated into English Language Learning environments to teach. Incorporating AI into English Language Learning environments involves teaching subjects like English for Academic and Professional Purposes, Practical Research, 21st Century Literature, Creative Nonfiction, Reading and Writing Skills, and Oral Communication. This integration requires a complex interplay between technology, pedagogy, and learner engagement. Geng et al. (2021) assert that AI integration in language learning requires educators' support and effective instructional strategies. AI tools support students with disabilities in composition, proofreading, and language structure checking, including automatic transcription, translation, and text-to-speech. However, AI may struggle with context comprehension and precise translations due to the evolving nature of languages (LLS English, 2023).

In Practical Research, AI verifies grammar, structure, and content, and develops language games and simulations to enhance learning. AI also assisted in data analysis, pattern discovery, and teaching method optimization. Langran et al. (2020) highlighted AI's role in creating customized educational resources and assessments that adapt to student progress.

AI integration in English education is seen as transformative in enhancing student engagement and teacher effectiveness (Dewi et al., 2021). In Creative Nonfiction, AI adapts lesson plans and provides personalized feedback, considering ethical implications. In 21st-Century Literature, AI enhances skills through language assessment, automated evaluation, and interactive practice. For Oral Communication, AI assists in developing speaking abilities and providing immersive experiences, such as real-time translation and pronunciation correction. AI can foster the development of various language skills (Ramdhani, 2021).

While some educators embrace AI, others express reluctance or anxiety (Chen & Yuan, 2022; Eslit, 2023; Fabro et al., 2024; Giray et al., 2024; Herminigildo et al., 2023; Obenza et al., 2023). The study revealed challenges in integrating AI tools, including connectivity issues, ethical concerns, overreliance, lack of resources, insufficient training, and the need for technical expertise (Melo, 2023). Enhancing critical and creative thinking and avoiding overreliance on AI tools are equally important challenges for language teachers (Santiago et al., 2023). Ultimately, AI tools are aids and should not replace the human agency of a language teacher (UNESCO, 2024a, 2024b).

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of technology tools and applications in teaching English in Senior High School offers numerous benefits for both educators and students. Teachers can enhance the learning experience, promote student engagement and proficiency, and use AI for creating and designing educational materials. Platforms like Grammarly, Canva Write, Quillbot, and ChatGPT support writing instruction by providing grammar and spell-checking tools, writing

guides, and idea generation assistance. Tools like Co-pilot, TalkPal, and ELSA Speak customize instruction and assist students in written and spoken communication, influencing class content and creating educational materials. AI's innovative approach to visual reinforcement and design empowers educators to create dynamic and engaging learning experiences that inspire creativity and foster collaboration.

Deploying AI in Senior High School language education requires understanding both AI technologies and the pedagogies that support language learning. By leveraging these resources effectively, educators can empower students to become confident and proficient communicators in English, equipped with the skills needed to thrive in an interconnected and multicultural society. Educational institutions should develop strategies to address the ethical guidelines associated with AI in language teaching and prioritize efforts to tackle the digital divide. Academic discourse among educators and policymakers is necessary to preserve the human element in teaching and learning. By addressing AI integration issues collaboratively, educators and stakeholders can harness AI's transformative potential to optimize language education practices and empower learners for success in a digitized world.

There is a demand for training and seminars focused on the proper implementation of AI technologies and applications. Future studies should explore the firsthand experiences of educators and students in private schools and Higher Education Institutions to gain a comprehensive understanding of AI's impact on language teaching and learning. The integration of AI in English language learning environments involves a complex interplay of technology, pedagogy, and learner engagement. Personalized AI-driven environments can enhance language learning by providing experiences tailored to individual learning trajectories.

Adaptive systems modify task difficulty, feedback methods, and content presentation. Speech recognition technology enhances pronunciation and listening abilities, enabling learners to engage in vocal interaction with AI systems and receive immediate feedback. These tools significantly increase the quantity of spoken language practice and provide real-time corrections and recommendations, often not possible in traditional classroom settings due to time limitations or teacher availability.

Finally, incorporating these tools presents challenges such as connectivity constraints, ethical usage, responsible information sharing, and the fear of overdependence. Given the challenges in integrating AI into language teaching, future studies could explore how AI integration advances or hinders the realization of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, especially in developing countries.

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