

# **SOCIAL** and **MANAGEMENT** **RESEARCH** **JOURNAL**

Research Management Centre (RMC)

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Vol. 18 No. 1

March 2021

ISSN 1675-7017

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## BRANDING THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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*Received: 30 November 2020*

*Accepted: 5 February 2021*

*Online first: 28 February 2021*

### ABSTRACT

*Country branding is a systematic process of organising the country's actions, behaviour, investments, innovations, and communications to achieve a desirable reputation. On the other hand, the country image represents the stereotyping of a country that does not always represent its identity, and that is the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Despite KSA's achievements, especially after the 2030 ambitious vision, it is mostly perceived as an oil-producing country. Therefore, this study aims to: review the concept of country image, identity, and branding examples, as well as evaluate the KSA current brand based on secondary information. The author uses a relevant literature review to explore the topic. This paper finds (1) a lack of a strategic plan, studies, and suggest the establishment of branding authority in KSA; (2) branding KSA is highly essential for two reasons. First, Branding will help KSA to highlight the 2030 vision successes and extend its image beyond the traditional perception. Second, branding is significant, especially with the current competition between countries. The paper may be first to bring attention to the importance of country branding in the KSA context.*

**Keywords:** *country branding, country image, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, vision 2030*



## INTRODUCTION

Many countries have created a specific image in the mind of investors, tourists, and consumers around the world. The typical image and stereotyping called country image (CI). CI is ‘a comprehensive picture formed by several variables such as unique products, historical events, relationships, traditions, level of manufacturing and technological development.’ These variables conveyed by different types of media, word of mouth, travel, and education experience. However, CI may not represent the real picture of a country. CI used widely to make decisions based on judgement. Besides, CI influences all kinds of choices, from consumer goods and industrial goods, foreign direct investment, and political decisions (Loo & Davies, 2006). Improving CI can create a unique country brand which will help to attract investments, factories, tourists, as well as increase sales and exports of local companies. All the benefits of branding a country were what the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) vision 2030 planning to achieve.

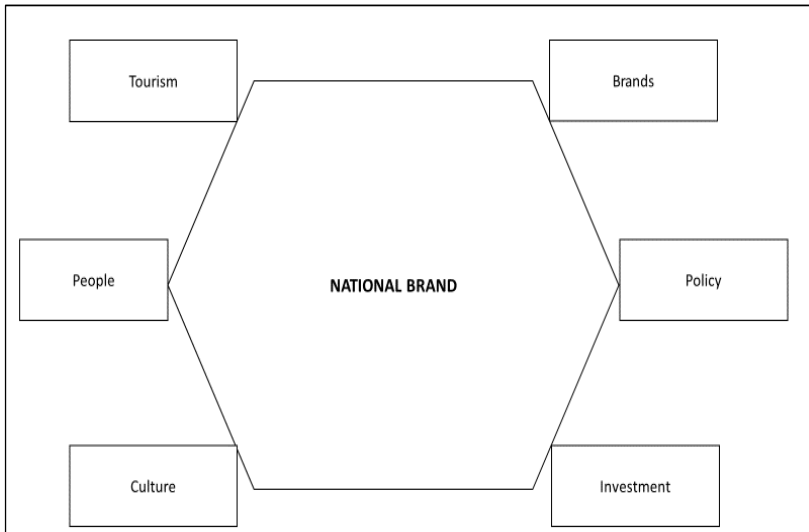
Vision 2030 aims to diversify KSA’s economy. Also, develop public service sectors such as recreation, education, tourism, health, infrastructure, investments, and increase non-oil exports. Vision 2030 is an ambitious plan to reduce KSA’s dependence on crude oil (Vision 2030, 2019). Currently, KSA achieved tremendous progress since the implementation of the vision 2030 plans. However, still, most of the people around the world from different cultures know KSA only as an oil-rich country. Thus, improving the KSA image and creating the KSA brand should go side by side with the implementation of the KSA vision 2030. Branding KSA will help to highlight the country’s achievements and expand the KSA image through country branding. Therefore, this article seeks to (1) review the essential concepts of country image, identity, and brand, then introduce branding cases; (2) analyse the KSA current brand based on secondary information. The remaining of the study is structured as follows: First, country image, identity, and branding concepts are presented with examples. Second, KSA and vision 2030 explained. Third, KSA’s current image and branding assessed, followed by discussion. Lastly, the paper concludes with recommendations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Country Image, Identity, and Branding

Country image (CI) consisting of a set of characteristics, values, and beliefs identified by the society, as those set it apart from others (Passow, Fehlmann & Grahlow, 2005). CI can be divided into micro and macro. Macro CI is the total of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs one has about in a particular country. There are three underlying dimensions under Macro country image, namely: economic, political, and technological. In contrast, micro CI is the total of beliefs one has about the product of a particular country (Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2007). For example, the perception of KSA, which is narrowed to an oil-producing country, can be categorised under micro CI.

Country image created through the cumulative effect of communication via hexagon, which consists of six natural channels. Hexagon model explains how a country's image and national brand created (Anholt, 2007). The model consists of tourism, brands, policy, investment, culture, and people (Figure 1).



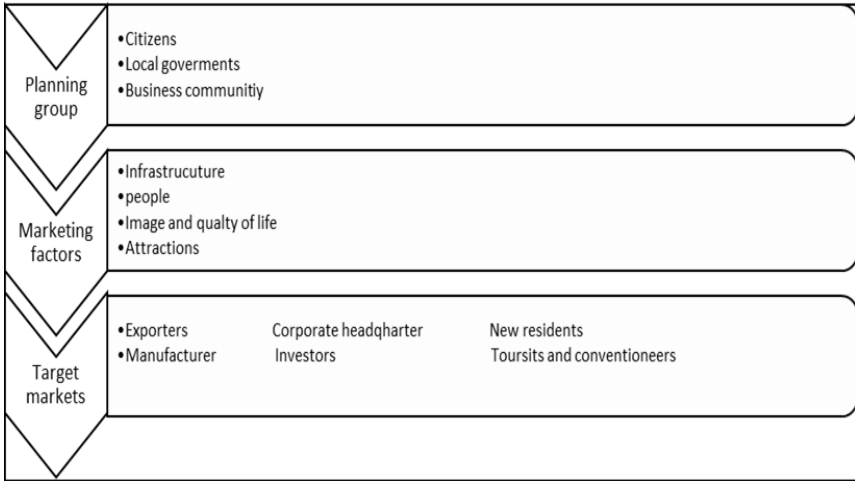
**Figure 1: Hexagon Creation of the Country Image and Brand**

CI is what the outside world thinks about a country. In contrast, country identity is what a country truly is (Hospers, 2004). Unfortunately, there is always a gap between CI and country identity, which called the identity image gap (Dinnie, 2008). However, countries should not accept their current image, especially if the CI does not reflect the real identity. Therefore, countries can create their image through country branding.

The term country branding (CB) used interchangeably with nation branding or place branding (Niesing, 2013). CB defined as the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences. The application of branding to countries is a relatively new phenomenon. The main objectives of country branding are to attract tourists and talents, increase FDI investment, and export (Dinnie, 2010). The main difference between CI and CB is that CI is what the outside world thinks about a country, while country branding is how a country wants to be known in the outside world. Enhancing CI through CB will lead to similar advantages.

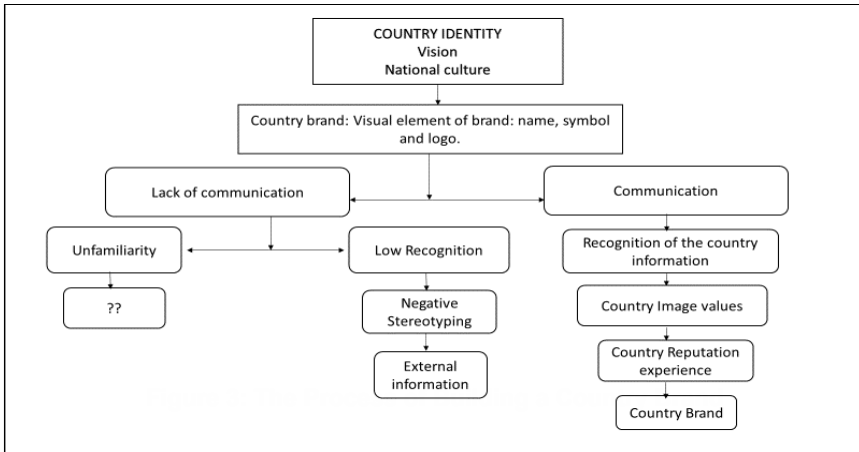
The further potential advantage of CB proposed by Temporal (2002) includes currency stability, international credibility, investor confidence, increase foreign political influence, and stronger global partnership. Branding of a country can be seen from the perspective of branding theories. Place branding theories in the literature divided into four parts, namely place as a product, as a service, as an image, and as a corporate brand. Thus, place branding is multidisciplinary and can be examined from a different perspective in theory and practice (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2010).

According to Kotler, Haider & Rein (2002), country branding has three primary levels (Figure 2). (1) Planning groups that manage the country branding. It includes citizens, local government, and the business community. The government is the leading group that is responsible for the country branding strategy. If the government wants to succeed, they should have the support and participation of the citizens and the business community. (2) Marketing factors, which include infrastructure, the people, image, and quality of life and attractions. The marketing factors in country branding can be used to promote a product, services, and tourism. (3) The target market, which includes investors, exporters, corporate headquarters, manufacturers, new tourism, and new residents (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 2002).



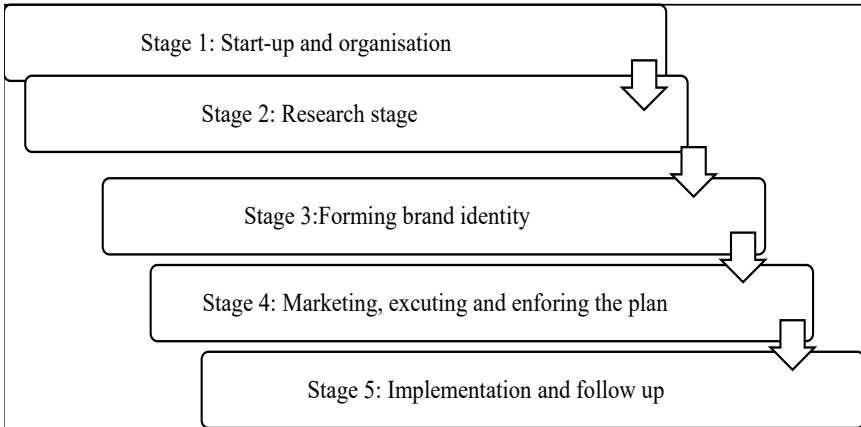
**Figure 2: Elements and Levels of Place Marketing**

The process of building a country brand introduced by Kline and Berginc (2003) includes five main steps. First, establish a country identity that should embrace the local heritage and culture. Second, develop visual elements of the country brand that includes the slogan, symbol, name, and logo. Third, communicate the country brand strategically with consistency. Fourth, building the image of the country through its stakeholders. Fifth, gain the reputation of a country through direct and indirect experience with the country brand. The right side of Figure 3 represents the process of building an effective country brand. However, the left side shows that with a lack of communication. A country will have low recognition and unfamiliarity, which will lead to an unknown country image represented in Figure 3 by question marks.



Moilanen and Rainisto (2009) introduced a different country branding process, which includes five stages (Figure 4). (1) Start-up and organisation focused on ideas and public relations to disseminate the concept of the country’s image. (2) The research stage, where both quantitative and qualitative methods used. This stage aims to understand how the country is perceived locally and globally with specific attention to target countries’ aims to influence. (3) The stage of planning and shaping the identity of the brand. In this stage, the conclusion from the research stage is utilised to choose the element for the brand identity and promise of value. Furthermore, formulating a strategic plan that includes brand structure, positioning, organisation distribution of work, and financing. (4) Preparing the planning stage. In this stage, a detailed operation plan should be developed, including steps and visuals, timetable of executing, and responsibilities. At the end of this stage, a detailed report with a plan is ready for the next stage, which is (5) the implementation and follow up stage (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009).





**Figure 4: Country Branding Process**

At the beginning of the country branding process, the inclusion of diverse stakeholders is essential. Country branding stakeholders can be internal living inside the country or external living outside the country (Anholt, 2007). Examples of stakeholders of the country are citizens of all nations, investors (internal and external), qualified workforce, students, retirees, domestic and, media, exporters, and foreign governments (Gilmore, 2002). However, the most important stakeholders are the country's citizens. The success of the branding depends heavily on citizens and their acceptance of the branding strategy (Aronczyk, 2009).

### **Cases of Country Branding**

Many countries attempt to create a national brand. Countries try to be detached or extend themselves beyond the typical stereotyping. In 1999 Germany tried to change people's perception of just being a country with 'perfect mechanical product' to 'exciting and surprising.' The cold and unemotional perception was due to the stereotyping of the country as the manufacturer and economic hub of Europe (Dinnie, 2008). However, the traditional view of Germany was its key to success. In 2017 made in a country index, Germany ranked as the most reputable country brand in the world. The high ranking was due to the association of made in Germany with the quality of the product made like Audi, Mercedes, and BMW (Statistical, 2017). Therefore, the stereotyping of the country should be embraced and integrated into the new branding. Egypt is another interesting example.

The country attempted to brand itself based on one single high-quality product, which is cotton. However, using a unique single product to brand a country is risky. It is too narrow and may not fully represent Egypt. Also, if the cotton product quality deteriorates, it will affect the country's brand. However, Egypt, in the end, decided to position itself as a business destination (Dinnie, 2008).

Malaysia is one of the most successful country branding cases. Malaysia brand itself with a tagline as 'Malaysia: Truly Asia' with a massive campaign that starts in 1999 and lasts until 2018. The branding targeted Europe, Middle East, North America, Oceania, and Asia. The slogan and the song of 'Malaysia: Truly Asia' became very popular among the targeted countries where the campaign took place. As a result, the branding campaign won more than 25 international awards.

Furthermore, Malaysia became a well-known exciting destination to visit. Therefore, visitors increased from 149,524 thousand in 1998 to almost 3 million visitors in 2018 (Bernama, 2019). KSA is a unique case. KSA is a unique case. The country is transforming itself beyond the traditional image of rich oil countries, especially after the introduction of vision 2030 by the crowned Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al Saud in 2016.

## **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Vision 2030**

KSA land area is about 2.15 million square kilometers. Located in a significant meeting point for the three continents, the KSA has substantial commercial importance. Besides, being the home of Mecca and Medina, where the Prophet's Mosque and the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Saudi nationals account for 62.69 percent of the 34,300,988 million people living in KSA. The middle age group of 15-64 makes up most of the total population in KSA (Saudi Arabia population, 2019). In 1902, King Abdulaziz Bin Saud entered Riyadh and embarked on a 30-year campaign to unite the Arabian Peninsula. In the 1930s, oil was discovered in various parts of the KSA, making it one of the wealthiest countries in the region (Turner, 2011). The KSA continued its economic boom by relying on oil, but by 2015, oil prices fell to an average of \$ 42 per barrel (Alarabiya, 2019). Therefore, Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, the crowned prince, decided it was time for a change and launched Vision 2030.

Vision 2030 is not just an initiative to reduce dependence on oil, its broader and more comprehensive. It seeks positive change in KSA economic, social, and culture. KSA vision 2030 established based on three pillars: KSA is the heart of the Arab and Muslim worlds because of the land of the Two Holy Mosques and the Muslim community. The second pillar of vision is that KSA to become a global force for investment by exploiting its resources. The third pillar is transforming KSA's unique strategic location in the heart of the Middle East into a global hub linking three continents, Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Vision 2030 revolves around three axes: (1) a vital society: living according to Islamic principles and proud of its national identity. Also, the community must have a healthy lifestyle, surrounded by a positive and attractive environment. Also, social welfare laws should be promoted and developed to build a healthy and productive society by strengthening the family's role and responsibilities and providing education capable of producing a personality; (2) a prosperous economy generates employment opportunities that attract competencies capable of competing with the host countries; (3) an ambitious country with an active government and officials.

On 24 April 2017, the Council of Economic Affairs and Development adopted a list of 12 programmes. The aim is to achieve vision 2030. The programmes are Rahman (Pilgrims) Guest Programme, National Transformation Programme, Public Investment Fund Programme, National Industrial Development, and Logistics Programme, Financial Sector Development Programme, National Partnerships, Strategic Partnerships Programme, Housing Programme, Privatisation Programme, Personal Strengthening Programme and Financial Balancing Programme. Vision 2030 seeks to make KSA a robust, prosperous, and stable country that provides opportunities for all (Vision 2030, 2019). Despite the progress achieved after the implementation of 2030 plans, the current image and brand did not reflect KSA's complete achievement.

## Saudi Arabia Image and Brand

This section aims to analyse the image and brand of the kingdom of KSA after the implementation of vision 2030. The study uses secondary data available that includes media reports, academic research, and indexes. There are several indexes for country image and branding ranking. KSA ranked differently based on the dimension and methodology used. According to Brand Finance’s (FCI) annual report, which is the most well-known country branding index, KSA world ranking is 30 increasing by 9 points since 2014. Also, KSA ranked number 5 in the Middle East after the UAE, Israel, Qatar, and Kuwait (Table 1). Alternatively, KSA ranked 19 in the world bank ranking. FCI index uses two main dimensions. First, the aspect of purpose, which includes value system, quality of life, and business potential. Second, the element of experience includes heritage and cultural, tourism, and made in product and services.

**Table 1: Middle East Country Nation Brand Raking**

Ranking	Country	FCI Ranking 2019	2014	From 2014 (point)
1	UAE	16	19	+3
2	Israel	22	26	+4
3	Qatar	26	24	-2
4	Kuwait	28	-	-
5	Saudi Arabia	30	39	+9
6	Oman	31	34	+3
7	Iran	72	71	-1
8	Iraq	75	-	-

**Note: Future brand- country index 2019**

Bloom Consulting is another index that evaluates the country’s brand. Bloom index uses five main dimensions. The attraction of investment, tourism, talent, increase of public diplomacy efforts and strengthening export. Each aspect has a different target audience, and each audience has a specific need. In bloom last released report, KSA ranked 7 in Asia and 25 in globally (Bloom Consulting, 2018).

Zhang and Benoit (2004) evaluated KSA efforts after the 9/11 event in the US. The researchers used Rhetorical analysis and data mainly from the Saudi embassy website and a news release from traditional media like Washington Post and the New York Times newspaper for the study. They concluded that KSA was successful in its effort to restore its image after 9/11. Attacking accusers and denial bolstering strategy were significant components of the image repair process.

Hader (2017) studied American college student's perception of KSA as a travel destination using questionnaires. The study found several vital results. First, the overall image of KSA was positive, except for the security concern. The event of 9/11 in 2001 is the reason behind this concern. Also, American college students expect a religious country, rich in culture, wealthy and hot in the weather. Second, American college students could not recall any famous attraction in KSA. Also, 50% of respondents thought that Oman, Dubai, and the Taj Mahal located in KSA. Lastly, American college students learn about KSA mostly through the news in the USA.

## **DISCUSSION**

Saudi Arabia achieved remarkable progress since the beginning of the 2030 vision. Socially, women can drive, travel without consent, and attend sports events. Economically, KSA joined three global financial indexes in 2019, namely the FTSE Index, the Morgan Stanley, and Emerging-Market Index. As a result, billions of Saudi riyals inflow to the market. KSA also advanced from 16th in 2016 to 7th in 2019 in the G20 countries. Non-oil exports rose by 22% in 2018 compared to 2017, and many industrial cities in different regions of the KSA were established (Arabic RT, 2019).

Despite all the progress since the initiative started in 2016, KSA still stereotyped as only as oil country (Hader, 2017). Therefore, branding KSA can help attract investments, increase non-oil revenue, and increase sector participation in GDP. Also, increase the value of local products exported due to of prestige Country of Origin Effect (COE). However, the essential part is highlighting the KSA achievements.

KSA is more than just an oil-producing country. It is now a new country in the process of an exciting transformation in all aspects of life. According to Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al Saud, KSA and the Middle East will be the new Europe. The oil-producing country image is an essential part of KSA identity. It is not easy to change because it reflects a fact. However, extending the country brand beyond the traditional image is highly relevant, which is similar to the Germany case (e.g., Dinnie, 2008). Despite the headline on the media locally and globally regarding KSA successes, KSA media in all forms, is encouraged to highlight and extend the country's image and brand beyond the traditional perception.

The success of any country branding required an independent strategic branding authority, which aims to build up the country brand strategically with consistency (Djordjevic, 2008). The branding authority should be integrated as part of the vision 2030. It should work closely with all stakeholders, especially the public relations departments in government ministries, by referring to Malaysia and Germany branding case cited from Bernama (2019) and Dinnie (2008). The lesson learned is that successful branding can be achieved by focusing on the country's real identity and embracing it. For example, the 'Malaysia Truly Asia' branding campaign reflects the three races Indian, Chinese, and Bumiputra. The three races are living in harmony in an Asian country that represents a relative majority of southeast Asia. The branding managed by the tourism ministry was narrow but successful. The author believes that an independent KSA branding authority can work with different stakeholders, especially citizens, to succeed as the literature suggests (e.g. Gilmore, 2002; Anholt, 2007; Aronczyk, 2009).

The government stakeholders should work closely with branding authority: Saudi Commission for Tourism & National Heritage (SCTH), KSA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commission attaché and Saudi clubs in hosted countries, Saudi Arabia Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and ministry of finance. However, the essential stakeholder that should work closely with the branding authority is the Ministry of Media, which should have a clear long-term strategy. The strategy should use both traditional and new media to brand the new KSA. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranking has progressed in economic, social, and technological aspects. However, achievements can be more noticeable with a country branding strategy and the support of research.

## CONCLUSION

In a global economy, a powerful country brand attracts investment, tourism, and talents. After the introduction of vision 2030 in 2016, KSA progress economically, socially, and technologically. However, the image of KSA always linked to oil. Therefore, extend the image and branding the kingdom of Saudi Arabia will highlight the success and create a positive reputation. KSA's current country branding measured by FCI, states that KSA, as a country brand, ranked 30th globally and 5th in the Middle East. The placing of KSA enhanced since 2014 by nine points but could have been placed even higher with country branding strategy. The study suggests the establishment of branding authority and policy to manage the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a brand. Also, there is a shortage of research on KSA branding. The paper focuses on the importance of country branding in the case of KSA transformation after vision 2030 started in 2016. For future study, the author suggests evaluating the country image from a tourist perspective using a quantitative approach, then propose a country brand for KSA.

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# THE PERCEPTION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CENTRAL MALAYSIA HIGH SCHOOL

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Received: 8 May 2020

Accepted: 10 February 2021

Online first: 28 February 2021

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the current understanding and perception of cooperative learning in teaching and learning in Malaysian high schools. This study emphasised on teachers' views on the cooperative learning approach to support their students' teaching and learning in the classroom. The study uses a qualitative approach involving ten academic staff of a local high school located at Subang Jaya, Selangor by using a semi-structured interview method. The findings showed positive perceptions and interest in the cooperative learning approach in teaching and learning in secondary school. There were many advantages of cooperative learning in teaching and learning both for staff and students. Nonetheless, this study found that time constraint, nature of the subject, students' capabilities, monitoring student learning, and learning assessments to be the barriers that influence teachers' disengagement with this student-centred approach. To summarise, data from this study warranted the authors to recommend educators to shift their teaching and learning from teacher-centred toward student-centred approach. Educators should also emphasise on cooperative learning approach in the classroom as it may help students to a better link between the concepts and the real world. Therefore, educators should invest*



*considerable time to learn and practice this concept and plan their teaching and learning around their learners.*

*Keywords: collaborative learning; teaching and learning; student-centred approach; learning strategies; Malaysia high school*

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are many learning strategies based on the students-centred approach that educators could use in-and-out of the classroom during teaching and learning with the students. Different learning strategies can be used according to the situation and students' background (e.g., strength, weaknesses, interests). Cooperative learning is a learning strategy commonly associated with the social theory which focuses on social interaction and active learning between teacher and students (Baloche & Brody, 2017; McWilliam, Malecha, Langford, & Clutter, 2017). The social learning theory suggests that behaviours were dynamics and develop through observation and imitating others. As most of us are visual learners, we are capable to learn and normalise practice through social engagement, observation, and direct instruction even without actual movement practice or direct reinforcement (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Chen et al., 2015). In simpler words, students would react positively or negatively based on the teacher's plan, structure, and modification made during each teaching and learning session. Students nowadays are far more technologically advanced than the previous generations. For instance, Malaysian aged between 16-64 have spent on average eight to nine hours daily with their gadgets (e.g., smartphones, tablets, wearable devices) for various purposes such as productivity, learning ideas, and socialising. Additionally, 100% of the respondents have utilised social network or messaging applications as well as spending on average two hours and 45 minutes on social media (Kemp, 2020).

Prior to this study, the authors have spent some time observing students' learning contents in-and-out of the classroom. The majority of the time students were seen to be highly dependent on the teacher's instructions and feedback to learn contents. Lack of meaningful communication between teacher and students as well as their peers between lesson reduce students' role to a receiver of knowledge and passive learners. Higher teacher talk

also leads to higher disengagement of students from learning contents and reduce the effectiveness of teaching and learning session. Higher emphasis on a textbook during learning also reduces students' excitement and the abilities to linked concepts and real-world situations.

Therefore, they need new ways of learning the subject matter and activities that can help them to remain excited and engage with the learning contents meaningfully. Students who enjoyed and presented with more learning ownership during class were associated with a higher number of physical activity (PA), interest, and engagement with contents (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Baranowski, 2016). Teachers would also have more opportunities to modify their learning contents, structure, and activities to optimised students' grasp of the contents. Besides that, teachers would also have more time to monitor students' learning and provide personalised teaching and feedbacks to their students (McDonough, Pope, Zeng, Lee, & Gao, 2018).

According to Chai, Tay, and Lim (2015), cooperative learning encourages students to form groups or partners to learn the subject more effectively. They also added the learning style that contributed to improving the students' soft skills which include communication, teamwork, and decision-making. Higher engagement between teacher-students would enhance their understanding of the concepts and achieved more set goals (Demirham & Altay, 2001). Cooperative learning is an improvement from traditional learning as students have more opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills by engaging in discussion with their peers and students dictating their learning process (e.g., generate ideas, making decisions, problem-solving) (Chai *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, they would have more freedom to explore, experiment, be creative, and have fun with the learning process. The higher freedom presented by the teachers to students also reduces the peer-pressure and fear of failure among students to participate and practice skills (McDonough *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, a previous study focuses on cooperative learning and softball striking unit with high school girls found that the approach led the students to performed fewer trials, but each of the trials was better in terms of quality, understanding, and appreciation of the skills learned (Johnson & Ward, 2001). Importantly, the adoption of cooperative learning encourages the students to be more involved during learning session and teachers emphasises on quality over quantity of the contents.

The educators as the leader in the classroom should have the initiative in making teaching and learning sessions more engaging and fun. In a cooperative learning approach, the educator would assume the role of facilitator. This allows the teacher to spend more time to observe and evaluate his/her students' learning. Higher observation time allows the teacher to identify students' correct and false techniques and provide meaningful feedback to improve teaching and learning sessions (Ozgul, Atan, & Kangalgil, 2019). Consequently, students can enjoy learning without excessive stress and fear of failure (Huang, Tu, Wang, Chen, Yu, & Chou, 2017). Besides that, a teacher who heavily involves his/her students in the planning, teaching, learning, and modification process in-and-out of classroom would also help the students to increase their self-efficacy, motivation, and learning enjoyment (Beard, 2015). Additionally, cooperative learning is capable to develop the students' whole learning domains (i.e., psychomotor, cognitive, affective) (Munir, Baroutian, Young, & Carter 2018; Raviv, Cohen, & Aflalo, 2019). For instance, learning about substance abuse during health education through role-playing would promote higher discussion, creativity, physical activity, and a sense of satisfaction among students. Different role-play between groups would also lead to higher understanding, retention, and linkage between the concept and real-life situations.

## **PURPOSE**

This study builds on the previous studies on cooperative learning to determine the current teachers' perceptions toward this approach in their teaching and learning. Therefore, the following research questions were being addressed in this study: (1) what are the current knowledge and perceptions among teachers about cooperative learning, (2) does cooperative learning provide more advantages compared to traditional teaching and learning, and (3) what are the main barriers teachers perceived to implement cooperative learning in their teaching and learning.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were in-service local high school teachers. There was a total of ten participants with an age range of 28-50 years old participated in this study. Most participants were from Malay ethnic backgrounds with two from Chinese and Indian ethnics backgrounds, respectively. Most of the participants orally reported average knowledge on the student-centred approach and occasionally adopting cooperative learning as part of their teaching and learning process.

### **Settings**

The Progressive High School was located in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. There were 1512 students currently enrolled in the school with 101 teachers responsible for morning and afternoon school sessions.

The teachers' office was the main area used to implement this study. There were three participants involved in each of the focus group discussion sessions lasting between 30-60 minutes/session (with exception of the final session which involves four participants). The questions and examples were modified to help teachers relate the cooperative learning concepts with their actual teaching approaches. The researchers prompted teachers with questions, scenarios, and past experiences to encourage participants' engagement in the discussion.

### **Study Design and Procedures**

This study involved teachers' knowledge and perceptions towards the student-centred approach and cooperative learning to promote teaching and learning. The data collection lasted for five weeks between October and November 2018. This study primarily focused on accentuating participants' roles during learning and assessing their knowledge and self-efficacy related to cooperative learning.

Prior to the study, the researchers were required to obtain approval from the State Education Department, District Education Office, and the school's administrators. Additionally, the researchers have spent considerable time exploring the literature for issues and current gaps between studies as well as designing appropriate questions to address the study objectives during discussion sessions. The questions were designed based on knowledge and issues revolving around cooperative learning. The draft questions have been reviewed by two experts (each from the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences respectively) for validity and appropriate modification to the questions. The co-researcher through his practicum stint at the local school directly approach potential participants (i.e., verbally and written) and invited them to participate in this study. The purpose, objectives, risks (if any), and significance of the study were thoroughly explained throughout each of the processes (e.g., approval process, beginning of each discussion). Pseudonyms were used to reflect participants' answers and all data were kept confidential for the study purposes. The Institutional Review Board approval was obtained from the school and the teachers provided consent to participate in this study.

## **Instruments**

Instruments that has been shown to produce reliable and valid scores were used for this study. These include focus group discussion, sound recorder, and memos to record information. The information gained from each session were transcribed and reviewed for trends and themes. Each of the transcripts was cross-checked among researchers to ensure the accuracy of the data.

## **Data Analysis**

This study adopted the phenomenological research approach which emphasises the wholeness of experiences and how it influences an individual's behaviours (Moustakas, 1994). Rather than describing the experience based on the categorical system, conceptual, and scientific criteria, the researchers focus more on participants' perceptions and talks about cooperative learning in their teaching and learning sessions. Additionally, the researchers' practice the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) steps which involve: (1) observing phenomena, (2) questioning, (3) collecting data,



(4) linking concepts with data, and (5) communicating (Sudria, Redhana, Kirna, & Aini, 2018) throughout each phase of this study. The data collected were transcribed to obtain important details and categorised into several themes (i.e., perception, interest, advantages, effectiveness). Systematically arranged data were helpful for researchers to analyse the data effectively and produced reliable results (Piaw, 2020).

## **RESULTS**

These findings were organised into four themes; (1) knowledge and perception of cooperative learning, (2) interest among participants to implement cooperative learning, (3) advantages of using cooperative learning, and (4) the main barriers in using cooperative learning during teaching and learning in the classroom.

### **Knowledge and Perception of Cooperative Learning**

Most of the respondents considered themselves to possess good knowledge about cooperative learning concepts. Respondent one explained the cooperative learning is a learning style that involved interaction between group members in solving problems; “I have known cooperative learning as the learning style which encourages the students to work in groups and there was interaction happened between them to identify issues and making collective decisions”.

Additionally, respondent two also supported the perception that cooperative learning is a collaborative effort by the students to complete a specific task given by the teacher. The respondent added “cooperative learning is the learning style of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning by the Malaysian education system”; “I was introduced to cooperative learning through a course that I attended last year. I knew the learning style since then.” For respondent three and respondent four, they shared a similar perception toward cooperative learning; the learning style which promotes students to work in groups in learning contents or skills.

## **Interest among Participants to Implement Cooperative Learning**

Most of the participants rate themselves as likely to practice the cooperative learning approach in the classroom with six participants rate four on a scale of 1-5 (very low and very high respectively). There were two respondents which rate themselves three and the other two considered themselves as most likely to adopt cooperative learning in their teaching and learning.

## **The Advantages of Cooperative Learning**

Most of the respondents agreed cooperative learning approach could help them to improve their teaching and learning and students enhance their learning experience. Consequently, students were more likely to enjoy learning and achieve success during examinations. Respondent two also highlighted the reduced role of himself in the classroom to provide more time for students to discuss and practice the skills learned. Meanwhile, respondent seven suggested cooperative learning to influence higher engagement among the students to the contents learned. She explained, “students were more willing to take initiatives and responsibilities to explore, develop contents, and solving issues arises from the activities compared to when I am teaching the contents”. Both respondents four and five suggested this approach to be beneficial in reducing off-task behaviours and helping the student to focus on the learning contents throughout the session.

## **The Main Barriers of Cooperative Learning in the Classroom**

Most of the respondents also agreed cooperative learning approaches were generally beneficial for both the teachers and students. Nonetheless, four respondents suggested the cooperative learning would not be guaranteed to improve the teaching and learning process. For instance, responded one voices concerns about students’ capabilities to learn the contents by themselves. While respondents two and three respectively were worried about classroom management and losing control when students were given more opportunities to talk and discuss with their peers. Respondent three added, “it is quite difficult for me to fully trust my students to stay on tasks throughout the session as they would probably get distracted easily and

eventually not achieving the learning objectives”. Additionally, respondent six believed he would need more time to implement cooperative learning successfully. He added, “as cooperative learning was more dynamic compared to the traditional method, I would need more time to plan, practice, and create an activity which allows them to learn effectively within this approach”.

## DISCUSSION

Both Ozgul et al. (2019) and Huang *et al.* (2017) explained the cooperative learning was hugely capable of shifting education from the teacher-centred into student-centred teaching and learning. Many of the respondents consistently pointed out the higher learning ownership given to the students enables them to spend more time observing and evaluating students’ learning. Additionally, students were more likely to engage with the contents and their peers during teaching and learning compared to the previous spoon-fed culture. Besides that, the teacher as a facilitator was crucial to develop confidence and reduce the fear of failure among students, especially when learning new contents (Huang *et al.*, 2017).

According to Munir *et al.* (2018), cooperative learning was beneficial to promote wholly student development (i.e., psychomotor, cognitive, affective). These were reflected in this study; for instance, respondent one suggested cooperative learning improves the students’ confidence levels and their critical thinking. Respondents three and four also believed the approach help student to be more independent learners and work closely with their peers to understand the contents better or solving an issue. This study also reflected on Johnson and Ward (2001) when respondent seven suggested: “the task given was discussed among students thus helping me to save time and better prepare for the next session”. He also added, “problems were solved easier when the students cooperate with their peers and they enjoyed the process of learning”. Besides, as cooperative learning was more dynamic than traditional teaching and learning, students were more encouraged to move around the classroom and be more active in the classroom (Lengel & Kuczala, 2018). This would eventually reduce the likelihood of the students getting non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at the early stages of their life (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2019).

Nonetheless, some respondents suggested cautions in using cooperative learning and the approach would not be guaranteed improvement in teaching and learning. For instance, respondent one highlighted some students were struggling to engage with the contents and peers in her class when she adopted the approach. She was required to assist the students by modifying her instructions and expectations when completing the task given. Consequently, this would cause time wastage and reduce teaching and learning in class. These concerns were also highlighted in the previous study suggested the traditional method was more beneficial in teaching technical contents while cooperative learning was useful in teaching sport tactics and strategies (Karavelioglu, 2012).

Additionally, Respondent 10 also added “the approach only effective in a certain subject like language; not in some subjects which required calculation and analysing inputs”. Some respondents were also concern with monitoring students’ learning, off-task behaviours, and capabilities to learn the contents effectively when using the cooperative learning approach. The previous study accentuated the importance of practice time, teacher’s demonstrations, explanation, and attending to students’ learning to promote a cooperative learning approach in the classroom (Zulkifli & Kulinna, 2018; Vera, Alvarez, & Medina, 2008).

### **Implication for Practice**

The results from this study are important to guide teachers in their planning, delivering contents, and management of the classroom. Although cooperative learning could be useful to promote teaching and learning, teachers need to be aware of their students’ strengths, weaknesses, and interests to ensure the approach they use is the most suitable for that specific group of students. The teacher should also vary their teaching approach by doing modifications on rules, learning area, and instructions based on students’ capabilities to ensure meaningful students’ learning. Dividing students into teams or partners, present scenarios, fantasy cards, using music as cues are important to promote active students’ involvement, enhance learning, and effective practice of skills while maintaining the authenticity of students’ learning experience (Zulkifli & Kulinna, 2018). A few limitations to this study included small sample size, lack of comparison group, and short study duration. Future studies should address these limitations and

potentially getting other stakeholders' (e.g., students, parents, policymakers) perspectives about cooperative learning. Comparisons between primary and high school teachers would also strengthen the current information about best teaching practices based on students' needs.

## CONCLUSION

This study further strengthens the current knowledge of teachers' knowledge and perception of the cooperative learning approach in the classroom. Furthermore, this study believes that teachers are more willing to shift their approach from teacher-centred toward student-centred when they prioritise their students' learning as well as having supportive administrators and colleagues. Nonetheless, cooperative learning might not be the best approach in subjects that focus on calculation and information analysis due to the complexity of the contents and teachers' perceptions of their students' capabilities.

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## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, SELF-EFFICACY AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF LECTURERS

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Received: 9 March 2019

Accepted: 10 February 2021

Online first 28 February 2021

### ABSTRACT

*Individuals with high emotional intelligence and high self-efficacy are capable in completing difficult tasks and subsequently, produce excellent job performances irrespective of how hectic their work situations are. This study looks at the correlations between emotional intelligence and job performance, as well as between self-efficacy and job performance among lecturers at a centre of foundation studies owned by a public university in Selangor. Due to its quite small population size, total population sampling technique was applied. Questionnaires were distributed to all 140 lecturers there, but only 86 lecturers completed them (response rate = 61.4%). The findings revealed there was a statistically significant and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance, as well as there was a statistically significant and positive correlation between self-efficacy and job performance. All four emotional intelligence dimensions: regulation of emotion, self-emotional appraisal, use of emotion and others emotional appraisal; as well as all three self-efficacy dimensions: teaching, research and other academic or service-related activities were also statistically significant and positively correlated with job performance. As for the implications of this study, it contributes to the corpus of knowledge in the*



*area of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and job performance among lecturers in Malaysia context.*

*Keywords: emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, job performance, lecturers, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), Malaysia*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recently, an outstanding job performance among lecturers are not only determined by their external strengths such as excellent academic qualifications, industrial experiences, and vast knowledge in the subject matter, but also their internal strengths such as emotional intelligence and self-efficacy (Mohammad Sophian, 2016; Tajudin, 2016; Bangs & Frost, 2012; Hemmings & Kay, 2009).

Lecturers with high emotional intelligence are skilled at evaluating their own emotions, communicating their own needs, being attentive to others' needs and providing emotional supports, as well as gaining cooperation from others that enable them to accomplish tasks and eventually produce high job performance. Apart from emotional intelligence, self-efficacy is regarded as essential in determining one's job performance especially for professions that heavily involve interactions with other people such as lecturers. When they are confident with their skills and abilities, they are able to perform their work efficiently in various kinds of situations especially when dealing with difficult people. In the context of lecturer as a career, self-efficacy attribute is highly needed in the aspect of teaching, research, and other academic or service-related activities as these three aspects are the main domains of lecturers' responsibilities.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to Williams and Burden (2000), the roles and responsibilities of lecturers in tertiary institutions have increasingly becoming more complex, diverse and tedious. Lecturers are responsible for many tasks such as teaching, assessing students' learning progress, planning curriculum, constructing examination papers, conducting and writing research,

supervising students' project, facilitating students' clubs and societies, presenting research in conference, engaging in community service activities, organising events, and building networking with industry officials (Haron, Syed Mustafa & Alias, 2010). To ensure excellent job performance is being produced, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are two aspects that should be possessed by the lecturers. When lecturers are struggling to perform various tasks simultaneously in a hectic work situation, emotional intelligence enables the lecturers to remain calm and to keep their emotions under control; whereas their self-efficacy ensures them that they are capable to conduct and complete the task well.

Despite extensive numbers of correlational researches regarding emotional intelligence and job performance (Al-Kahtani, 2013; Brackett, River & Salovey, 2011; O'Boyle *et al.*, 2011), as well as self-efficacy and job performance (Cherian & Jacob, 2013; Lai & Chen, 2012; Lunenburg, 2011) that were conducted and published in the international context; it is the opposite in the local context. To date, it seems only a small number of published correlational studies pertaining to emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job performance among university lecturers in Malaysia can be found. Hence, this research aims to investigate correlations between emotional intelligence and job performance, as well as self-efficacy and job performance among lecturers at a centre of foundation studies owned by a public university in Selangor.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION & HYPOTHESES**

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance?

H1: There is a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy and job performance?

H2: There is a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy and Job Performance**

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability in identifying and understanding one's own emotional reactions and those of others accurately, as well as managing and using one's own emotions wisely. The study embraced Mayer and Salovey's Four Branch Model of Emotional Intelligence (1997) as the main theory for emotional intelligence variable. The dimensions of emotional intelligence measured in this study are confined to the use of emotion, self-emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion and other's emotional appraisal.

Besides that, self-efficacy is defined as lecturers' belief on their abilities in accomplishing teaching, research, and other academic or service-related tasks. The study uses Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1994) as the main theory for self-efficacy variable. The dimensions of self-efficacy measured in this study are confined to the course content, instructions and assessments, tutorial and lectures, reporting and supervising research, conducting and managing research, writing major works and reviewing research, professional engagement activities and internal executive tasks.

Whereas job performance is defined as the degree an employee performs his/her job which later contributes to the outcomes and success of an organisation. The study refers to Borman and Motowidlo's Job Performance Model (1993) as the main theory for job performance variable. Dimensions of job performance measured in this study are confined to 1) task performance and 2) contextual performance.

### **Significance of Emotional Intelligence at Workplace**

Currently, there is a growing empirical evidence that indicates the significant impact of emotional intelligence towards job performance and productivity. It contributes to the identification of occupational potential in individuals (Mohammad *et al.*, 2012), the ability to distinguish between average and outstanding employees (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton & Boyle, 2006; Lopes *et al.*, 2006) lower levels of perceived stress, workplace distress, and

better quality of working life (Saeid, 2012), effective leadership behaviours (Pillay, Viviers & Mayer, 2013) and collaborative conflict management skills (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013). Besides that, the analyses of studies of about 500 organisations worldwide by Goleman (1998) highlighted emotional intelligence (EQ) as essential in virtually any job. He pointed out that those with the highest EQ rose to the top in the organisations and became leaders. Another important finding from these studies is that excellent employees possessed more emotional intelligence than other employees (Goleman, 1998). Furthermore, as different jobs call for different types of emotional intelligence, it undeniably affects their job performance.

### **Significance of Self-Efficacy towards Job Performance**

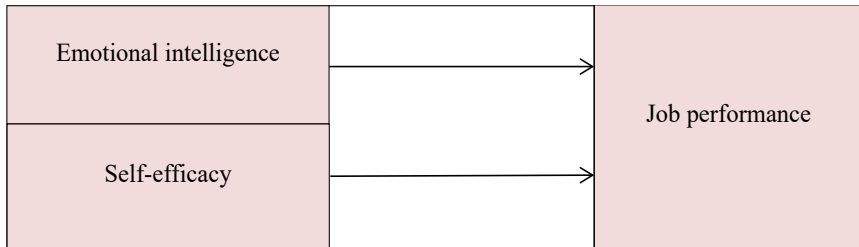
Self-efficacy has powerful effects on learning, motivation, and performance as people try to learn and perform only on tasks that they believe will be able to perform successfully (Lunenburg, 2011). Conversely, one rarely attempts to perform a task when one expects it to be unsuccessful.

In the context of job performance, Bandura (1982) explained three ways of how self-efficacy may affect the performance. Firstly, self-efficacy influences the goals that employees choose for themselves (Lunenburg, 2011). Employees with low levels of self-efficacy tend to set relatively low goals for themselves. Conversely, an individual with high self-efficacy is likely to set high personal goals. Research indicates that people not only learn but also perform at levels consistent with their self-efficacy beliefs. Secondly, self-efficacy influences learning as well as the effort that people exert on the job (Lunenburg, 2011). Employees with high self-efficacy generally work hard to learn how to perform new tasks, because they are confident that their efforts will be successful. Employees with low self-efficacy may exert less effort when learning and performing complex tasks, because they are not sure the effort will lead to success. Thirdly, self-efficacy influences the persistence with which people attempt new and difficult tasks (Lunenburg, 2011). Employees with high self-efficacy are confident that they can learn and perform a specific task. Thus, they are likely to persist in their efforts even when problems surface. Conversely, employees with low self-efficacy who believe they are incapable of learning and performing a difficult task are likely to give up when problems surface. Thus, Bandura

and Locke (2003) concluded that self-efficacy is a powerful determinant of job performance.

### Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on the correlations of two independent variables which are emotional intelligence and self-efficacy with a dependent variable referring to the job performance. Emotional intelligence enables lecturers to perceive their own and others' emotions, as well as to regulate and use their emotions wisely. Meanwhile, self-efficacy enables lecturers to be confident of their own abilities in executing all lecturers-related tasks. Therefore, if both of these variables are exploited together by the lecturers while working, it is highly possible that their job performance might be enhanced.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Correlations of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy with Job Performance**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The present study investigates correlations between emotional intelligence and job performance, as well as between self-efficacy and job performance among lecturers. In relation to this, quantitative research design with supplementary qualitative data is employed to measure the correlation between the variables.

## Population and Sample

Due to its quite small population size, total population sampling technique was applied in this study. The total population of sample should be used when the population size is relatively small, and the population shares uncommon characteristics. Hence, all 140 lecturers at the centre of foundation studies were selected as the sample size of this study. Nevertheless, after two weeks of data collection process, only 86 out of 140 lecturers responded to the questionnaires. These lecturers served in six different departments: Science, Engineering, Education, Law, Islamic Studies and Language Studies.

## Instrumentation

A questionnaire was the main instrument used to collect data in this study. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for this questionnaire is .96 which indicates very high reliability.

**Table 1: Reliability Test Results According to Dimensions**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>No. of items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha value</b>
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>		
Use of Emotion	4	.82
Self-Emotional Appraisal	3	.85
Regulation of Emotion	4	.84
Others' Emotional Appraisal	5	.82
<b>Self-Efficacy (Teaching)</b>		
Course content, instruction and assessment	13	.88
Tutorials and lectures	9	.86
<b>Self-Efficacy (Research)</b>		
Reporting and supervising research	9	.89
Conducting and managing research	12	.92
Writing major works and reviewing research	10	.81
<b>Self-Efficacy (Other Academic Or Service-Related Activities)</b>		
Professional engagement activities	8	.85
Internal executive tasks	8	.87
<b>Job Performance</b>		
Task Performance	7	.82
Contextual Performance	12	.80
	104	.96

The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Sections A and B. Section A focused on the demographic data of the lecturers while Section B focused on emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and job performance variables. It comprises of both open and close-ended items. The close-ended items for emotional intelligence variable were adapted from Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) by Wong and Law (2002). Meanwhile, the close-ended items for self-efficacy variable were adapted from Lecturer Self-Efficacy Questionnaire by Hemmings and Kay (2009). As for the close-ended items for job performance variable, they were adapted from Job Performance Scale by Williams and Anderson (1991). Besides that, four open-ended questions are also included in this section: i) Given the scale of 1 to 6, how do you rate the correlation between your emotional intelligence and job performance?, ii) Please provide reasons for above ratings, iii) Given the scale of 1 to 6, how do you rate the correlation between your self-efficacy and job performance? and iv) Please provide reasons for above ratings. The inclusion of these open-ended questions is to probe further on the respondents' views regarding the correlations of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy with job performance.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Upon receiving the permission from the Director of the Centre of Foundation Studies to conduct research, 140 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by hand. Later, respondents were given briefing by the researcher about the instructions and items in the questionnaire as well as assurance of the data confidentiality. They were also asked to answer the questionnaire within a period of two weeks in order to ensure that all respondents had plenty of time to answer the questionnaire. The response rate was 61.4% as only 86 completed questionnaires out of 140 distributed questionnaires were successfully received by the researcher at the end of the two weeks dateline.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test is a procedure used to study correlation between two variables, one independent and one dependent (Singh, Puzziawati & Teoh, 2009). In the context of this study, it was conducted to find out whether there were significant correlation



(denoted as  $r$ ) between emotional intelligence (IV) and job performance (DV) as well as between self-efficacy (IV) and job performance (DV). To determine the degree of strength or magnitude of the correlation in the current study, Cohen's rule of thumb (1988) was used. Table 2 indicates the interpretation of correlation coefficients.

**Table 2: Cohen's Rule of Thumb**

Pearson coefficient ( $r$ )	The strength of correlation
0.10-0.29	Weak correlation
0.30-0.49	Moderate correlation
0.50-1.00	Strong correlation

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Correlations between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance?

**Table 3: Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance**

Emotional Intelligence		
Use of emotion	Pearson correlation	.342**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
Self-emotional appraisal	Pearson correlation	.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
Regulation of emotion	Pearson correlation	.416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Other's emotional appraisal	Pearson correlation	.261*
	Sig (2-tailed)	.015

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

The findings revealed a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance ( $r = .402$ ,  $p = .000$ ) among the lecturers (refer Table 3). This means that H1 has been proven: the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the job performance of lecturers. These findings are further supported by similar findings among lecturers in international and local settings (see Rahmat, Ghalavandi, & Jesarati, 2014; Md Yusoff, Khan, & Azam, 2014; Ngah, Jusoff, & Abdul

Rahman, 2009) as well as among local public secondary school teachers (see Lee & Panatik, 2016; Mohamad & Jais, 2010).

**Table 4: Correlation between Emotional Intelligence dimensions and Job Performance**

		Emotional Intelligence	Job performance
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	86	86
Job performance	Pearson Correlation	.402**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	86	86

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

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

All four emotional intelligence dimensions namely: regulation of emotion, self-emotional appraisal, use of emotion and others emotional appraisal were also positively correlated with job performance (refer Table 4). The analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between the use of emotion dimension and job performance ( $r = .342, p = .001$ ). there is a positive, weak, and statistically significant correlation between self-emotional appraisal and job performance ( $r = .290, p = .007$ ). there is a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between regulation of emotion dimension and job performance ( $r = .416, p = .000$ ). Lastly, there is a positive, weak, and statistically significant correlation between the other’s emotion appraisal dimension and job performance ( $r = .261, p = .015$ ). These findings are further supported by similar findings conducted among lecturers in Azerbaijan (Rahmat, Ghalavandi, & Jesarati, 2014) and local public secondary school teachers (Lee & Panatik, 2016).

**Qualitative Findings Regarding the Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance**

Supplementary qualitative data was also gathered from two open ended items in the questionnaire: i) Given the scale of 1 to 6, how do you rate the correlation between your emotional intelligence and job performance? and ii) Please provide reasons for above ratings to further triangulate and validate the quantitative findings. Based on the findings, 67 of the respondents (78%) rated either ‘5’ or ‘6’ indicating their agreement that there is a correlation

between their emotional intelligence and job performance. Followings are some of their insights regarding the correlation:

“If you know how to handle your emotion, you’ll be able to steer and lead yourself to success in the workplace.” (Respondent 3)

“The state of emotional intelligence reflects the job performance. If your emotions are stable, you can handle your workload well.” (Respondent 12)

“The ability to manage and control one’s emotion and to understand others is essential in performing well in your job.” (Respondent 63)

“Emotions play important parts in job performance as it is what you have to deal every day. People would want to see how you deal with strategies when you’re under pressure.” (Respondent 36)

“The way I manage EI has significant contribution towards my job performance.” (Respondent 14)

“It’s easy to feel bogged down with so much work and high expectations. With high EQ, I am able to manage my emotions towards my performance and try to justify and make sense of my experience. Without high EQ, we will give up.” (Respondent 7)

“With high emotional intelligence, our job can be done with 110% results too.” (Respondent 46)

“Good EQ will enable an individual to control their self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation better which lead to higher job performance.” (Respondent 63)

### **Correlations between Self-Efficacy and Job Performance**

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy and job performance?

**Table 5: Correlation between Self-Efficacy and Job Performance**

		Self-efficacy	Job performance
Self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	86	86
Job performance	Pearson Correlation	.486**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	86	86

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

The findings revealed a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy and job performance ( $r = .486, p = .000$ ) is shown among the lecturers (refer Table 5). This means that H2 has been proven: the higher the self-efficacy, the higher the job performance of the lecturers. These findings are further supported by similar findings among lecturers in international settings (Hada & Abu Taleb, 2016, Abdullah, 2015; Sultan & Tareen, 2014).

**Table 6: Correlation between Self-Efficacy Dimensions and Job Performance**

Self-Efficacy dimensions		
Teaching	Pearson correlation	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Research	Pearson correlation	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Other academic or service-related activities	Pearson correlation	.463**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

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

All three self-efficacy dimensions namely: teaching, research and other academic or service-related activities also were positively correlated with job performance of the lecturers (refer Table 6). These findings are further supported by similar findings conducted among lecturers in the international settings (Griffioen, De Jong & Jak, 2013; Khurshid, Qasmi, & Ashraf, 2012; Ozder, 2011).

The followings are detailed Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis for each dimension. The analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy in teaching and

job performance ( $r = .428, p = .000$ ). This means that the higher the self-efficacy in teaching, the higher the job performance among the lecturers. Next, the analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy in research and job performance ( $r = .431, p = .000$ ). This means that the higher the self-efficacy in research, the higher the job performance among the lecturers. Besides that, the analysis also depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy in other academic or service-related activities and job performance ( $r = .463, p = .000$ ). This means that the higher the self-efficacy in other academic or service-related activities, the higher the job performance among the lecturers.

**Table 7: Correlation between Self-Efficacy in Teaching sub-dimensions and Job Performance**

Self-Efficacy in Teaching		
Course content, instruction and assessment	Pearson correlation	.439**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Tutorial and lecture	Pearson correlation	.355**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

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

Overall, it was found that both self-efficacy in teaching sub-dimensions were positively correlated with job performance. The analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between course content, instruction, and assessment sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .439, p = .000$ ); and a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between tutorial and lecture sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .355, p = .001$ ).

**Table 8: Correlation between Self-Efficacy in Research sub-dimensions and Job Performance**

Self-Efficacy in Research		
Reporting and supervising research	Pearson correlation	.441**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Conducting and managing research	Pearson correlation	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Writing major works and reviewing research	Pearson correlation	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

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

Based on the table above, it was found that all three self-efficacies in research sub-dimensions were positively correlated with job performance. The analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between reporting and supervising research sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .441, p = .000$ ); Meanwhile, there is also a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between conducting and managing research sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .428, p = .000$ ) and a positive, moderate and statistically significant correlation between writing major works and reviewing research sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .362, p = .001$ ).

**Table 9: Correlation between Self-Efficacy in Other Academic or Service-related Activities Sub-Dimensions and Job Performance**

Self-Efficacy in Other Academic or Service-related Activities		
Professional engagement activities	Pearson correlation	.376**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Internal executive tasks	Pearson correlation	.484**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

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

Furthermore, the table indicate that both sub-dimensions were positively correlated with job performance. The analysis depicts a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between professional engagement activities sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .376, p = .000$ ); and a positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlation between internal executive tasks sub-dimension and job performance ( $r = .484, p = .000$ ).

## **Qualitative Findings Regarding the Correlation between Self-Efficacy and Job Performance**

Supplementary qualitative data was also gathered from two open-ended items in the questionnaire: i) Given the scale of 1 to 6, how do you rate the correlation between your self-efficacy and job performance? and ii) Please provide reasons for above ratings to further triangulate and validate the quantitative findings. 73 of the respondents (85%) rated either '5' or '6' indicating their agreement that there is a correlation between their self-efficacy and job performance. Followings are some of their insights regarding the correlation:

“If you are proficient in what you do, most probably your job performance would be equivalent to that.” (Respondent 74)

“Your belief towards your own ability helps in your capability to perform well.” (Respondent 7)

“If you have all the necessary skills required for your job specifications, you can perform/execute your roles/tasks well...” (Respondent 82)

“All types of job need skill, the more you get skill n passion, the more you job can be done with excellence.” (Respondent 46)

“Lecturers should have a clear understanding on their ability, hence they can gauge their own performance based on that.” (Respondent 74)

“You need a soul to live, efficacy is like a soul to perform your job well. If you feel confident of yourself, you will have good job performance.” (Respondent 11)

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed positive, moderate, and statistically significant correlations between emotional intelligence and job performance, as well as between self-efficacy and job performance among lecturers in the centre of foundation studies. This means that both emotional

intelligence and self-efficacy are important in contributing towards the enhancement of job performance. Majority of the respondents are also aware of these correlations based on their responses in the open-ended items. Along with their awareness, gradual development of their emotional intelligence and self-efficacy from time to time is expected to contribute towards better job performance in the future.

There are several implications from the findings of the study. Firstly, the findings of the study contribute to the existing corpus of knowledge in the area of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and job performance in local context. These findings fill the gap on correlational input between these variables as the variables typically were studied as a stand-alone variable in past studies. The findings also provide additional information to the current literature particularly job performance among lecturers. Secondly, the findings provide some empirical data that could offer some understandings pertaining to the variables discussed in the study to the Ministry of Higher Education and administrators of higher education institutions which will enable them to devise strategic planning and initiatives to enhance the lecturers' level of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in order to improve their job performance.

Next, there are few suggestions for further research. Firstly, due to time constraint and financial limitation, the study of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and job performance was only confined to lecturers in a centre of foundation studies owned by a public university. Therefore, generalisations of the findings for a bigger population of lecturers may not be achieved. Hence, with a bigger financial support, it is suggested that the future study is conducted on a bigger sample size and involves lecturers from both public and private higher education institutions to enable comparison of their emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job performance levels. Secondly, an in-depth qualitative research about what other factors aside from emotional intelligence and self-efficacy that may enhance job performance among lecturers should be conducted.



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# CHALLENGES OF YOUNG AGRIPRENEURS IN EASTERN BHUTAN

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Received: 28 December 2020

Accepted: 14 February 2021

Online first 28 February 2021

## ABSTRACT

*Bhutan encourages youth to engage in agribusiness. However, many young Bhutanese not pursuing agribusiness indicates the prevalence of challenges that remain unaddressed. These challenges must be understood adequately in order to not only encourage but retain the youth entering into the agribusiness sector. Bhutan has a scarcity of research on the challenges faced by young agripreneurs; therefore, this study initiated the filling of this gap. This study was conducted in Mongar, Trashigang, and Trashiyangtse districts of Eastern Bhutan. Data were collected from 50 registered young agripreneurs in these districts using a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire. The results showed that young agripreneurs were challenged most by environmental issues (82%), followed by inaccessible financial supports (80%), and management issues (58%). Although 56% of the young agripreneurs indicated that they generally faced marketing challenges, the number was 10% less at present than when they initially started their business. Access to land and farm inputs (overall) were not a problem for many young agripreneurs. Accordingly, to promote agribusiness, this study recommends relevant authorities to support the establishment of enabling business environments for young agripreneurs by training them in climate-*



*smart agriculture, the provision of micro-credits, and improving their access to enterprise management training, such as leadership.*

**Keywords:** *agribusiness, young agripreneurs, and challenges of agripreneurs*

## INTRODUCTION

The depopulation and aging in the agricultural sector are serious challenges facing nations around the world. Bhutan is by no means an exception. Although the agriculture sector currently employs 51.1% of its population (National Statistics Bureau [NSB], 2020), the youth between the age of 15 and 34 years, which make up approximately 40% of its population, do not prefer to pursue a career in agribusiness (Dendup, 2018; Pelzom & Katel, 2017). Instead, many prefer to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of non-agricultural employment. Out of about 22% of the rural population who migrated to urban centres, the majority were youth between 15 and 29 years old (NSB, 2018). The out-migration of rural youth reduce the available labour in rural areas; thereby, hindering the overall development of agribusinesses. A declining rural workforce is partially responsible for the reduction of land used for agriculture, from 2.93% in 2010 to 2.76% in 2016 out of country's geographical area of 3,839,400 hectares (Ministry of Agriculture and Forests [MoAF], 2019). This decline has also contributed to the rise in import dependence in basic food items in the country. For instance, Bhutan imported major food items worth approximately seven billion ngultrums in 2019 from India, its largest trading partner (MoAF, 2019). Despite the extensive migration to urban centres, Bhutan has a youth unemployment rate of 11.9% (NSB, 2019).

The increasing demand for value-added food for the growing urban population makes it a strong business case for youth to participate in agribusiness (Yami *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, agribusinesses are thought to be a practical way to attract youth back into agriculture, as there is a sure market (Susilowati, 2014). The rising import of agricultural products in Bhutan also signifies a business opportunity to commercialise agriculture through agribusiness. For these reasons, government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources) and Civil Society Organisations (e.g., Loden Foundation and Tarayana



Foundation) have supported young Bhutanese to pursue agribusiness. Additionally, two agencies in Eastern Bhutan, including the Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihoods Enhancement Programme (CARLEP) and Agriculture Research and Development Center (ARDC), Wengkhari, are partly mandated to encourage youth participation in agribusiness (CARLEP, 2020).

Studies from the developing countries report on several challenges restricting youth's entry into the agribusiness sector, including individual aspirations and expectations, limited access to land and credit, and low profitability and economic pressures (Leavy & Hossain, 2014; Som *et al.*, 2018; Leavy & Smith, 2010). Rural youth also experience challenges related to land, farm input, market, management, finance, and the environment (Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 2014). In Bhutan, the inadequate response to the Royal Government of Bhutan's (RGoB) efforts suggests the presence of obstinate challenges hindering Bhutanese youth from partaking in agribusiness. According to Pelzom and Katel (2017), young Bhutanese do not prefer employment in the agriculture sector because they perceive the loss of crops, lack of resources, parental pressure, and lack of technical and financial access in the agriculture sector. Similarly, Dendup (2018) also stated that people, including youth, perceive farming as a difficult and dubious career.

Although there is a positive trend of youth engagement in the agriculture sector, most of the youth still prefer to migrate from rural areas to urban areas; thereby perpetuating the decline of the workforce in rural Bhutan (Pelzom & Katel, 2017; Tshewang *et al.*, 2017). In the absence of an adequate understanding of young agripreneurs' challenges, it is arduous to design effective interventions to encourage and retain the youth entering into the agribusiness sector. Understanding young agripreneurs' challenges could help stakeholders formulate effective programmes and projects that attract and retain youth in agribusiness. Engaging youth in agriculture through agribusiness has the potential to address issues related to rural to urban migration, unemployment, and rising food imports.

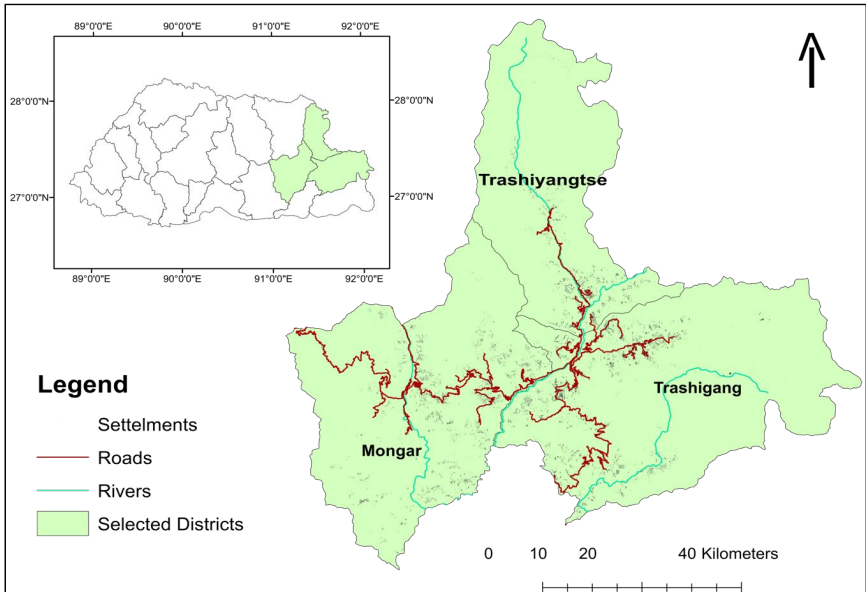
While previous studies, including Dendup (2018) and Pelzom and Katel (2017) capture the perception around these challenges, there is still limited comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by youth

pursuing agribusiness in the country. Therefore, this study investigated the challenges faced by young agripreneurs in Eastern Bhutan.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Area**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted from January to February 2020 in Eastern Bhutan. Eastern Bhutan was selected based on the dominant patterns of out-migration being from the east to west towards the major urban centres located in Western Bhutan, leaving Eastern Bhutan largely depopulated (Choda, 2012). Moreover, Eastern Bhutan has a list of registered young agripreneurs with the CARLEP office. The CARLEP, along with ARDC, promotes market-driven farming in Eastern Bhutan. One of the mandates for CARLEP is to encourage youth engagement in agribusiness in six Eastern districts, including Lhuentse, Mongar, Pemagatshel, Samdrup Jongkhar, Trashigang, and Trashiyangtse (CARLEP, 2020). Three of these districts; Mongar, Trashigang, and Trashiyangtse were selected for this study (Figure 1). The three selected districts have varying agro-ecological zones, ranging from wet subtropical to alpine zones (MoAF, 2019), suitable for a diverse range of crops and livestock production. Bhutanese farmers, including those in selected districts, largely maintain their practice of self-subsistence and integrated farming of crops and livestock (Wang *et al.*, 2019). Mongar has population of 37,150 people, while Trashigang and Trashiyangtse has 45,518 and 17,300 people respectively (NSB, 2020).



**Figure 1: Study Area Showing Mongar, Trashigang, and Trashiyangtse Districts (Source by authors)**

## Sample Size and Sampling

Young agripreneurs, in this study, refers to agricultural entrepreneurs who are between the ages of 15-34 years, pursuing a career in agribusiness. While there are various definitions of the term agribusiness, for the purposes of this study, agribusiness encompasses the business-related activities around agriculture from production, processing, distributing, and marketing of crops, livestock, and forestry products. From a total of 67 young agripreneurs registered with CARLEP and ARDC in Mongar, Trashigang, and Trashiyangtse districts, using a two-stage simple random sampling, this study selected 50 young agripreneurs (i.e., 74.63%). The first stage involved a random selection of three out of six districts (50%) where CARLEP is active in Eastern Bhutan. The second stage involved the random selection of 50 young agripreneurs. Out of the 50 young agripreneurs, 34% were from Mongar, 36% from Trashigang, and 30% from Trashiyangtse. The choice of both districts and young agripreneurs employed simple random sampling using the lottery method.

## **Data Collection Instrument and Procedure**

The survey used a two-part semi-structured questionnaire as it enabled the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The first part of the questionnaire collected data on the profile of the young agripreneurs, including their age, gender, education level, business type, net income, reasons for partaking in agribusiness, and assets owned. The second part of the questionnaire collected data on the challenges the young agripreneurs faced in six major areas pertaining to their business: land, farm input, market, management, finance, and environment, based on a FAO study reporting on similar challenges for rural youth to participate in the agriculture sector (FAO, 2014). The young agripreneurs were able to self-administer the semi-structured questionnaires because they were literate. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, we designed most of the questions to collect categorical data comprising two-point scales of 0 (No) and 1 (Yes) alongside objective type questions (Tenzin & Natsuda, 2016). On average, each respondent took 15-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

## **Questionnaire Pre-Test**

The ARDC and CARLEP were included in the development of the questionnaire survey, where they were asked to comment, based on their field experiences and knowledge of youth and agribusiness in Eastern Bhutan. The questionnaire was then subjected to pre-testing. Five young agripreneurs in Mongar district participated in the pre-test. They could answer most of the questions accurately and precisely without difficulty. The survey questions were revised and refined according to their comments.

## **Data Analysis**

The questions on the respondent's profiles and challenges provided a series of categorical data. Pre-determined statements describing challenges were rated by the respondents on the two-point scale of 0 and 1 (representing 'No' and 'Yes,' respectively). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to perform descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The study area map was generated using Arc GIS version 10.6.1.

## **Ethical Approval and Consent**

The proposal to conduct this survey was reviewed and approved by the College of Natural Resources, Lobesa, and the implementing agencies (ARDC and CARLEP). The scope and purpose of this study was explained to the respondents and their consent was received before administering the survey.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Profile of Respondents**

Of those we surveyed, 72% of the young agripreneurs were men, all of whom had received formal education. With regards to what motivated them to start their agribusiness, 69% responded that it was due to their own self-interest, while 30% responded that it was due to external supports, while only 1% mentioned being persuaded by their family. We found that 60% received a monthly net income of Nu.10,000-16,999, indicating that most of them were small-scale agripreneurs. Despite their small-scale, only 20% relied on non-farm activities for additional income, which included carpentry, vehicle hiring services, and wage labour. All young agripreneurs owned a cell phone, and 90% owned land (Table 1).

**Table 1: Profiles of Young Agripreneurs in Eastern Bhutan (n = 50)**

Profile characteristic	Category	Respondent (%)
Gender	Male	72
	Female	28
Education level	Secondary level	56
	Tertiary level	44
Reasons for agribusiness	Self-interest	69
	External support	30
	Family persuasion	1
Net income (Nu.)	3,000-9,999	13
	10,000-16,999	60
	17,000-23,999	17
	24,000-30,999	10
Non-farm activities	Yes	20
	No	80
Assets owned	Cell phone	100
	Land	90
	Machinery	67
	Television	57
	Livestock	47
	Vehicle	17

## Challenges of Young Agripreneurs

The second part of the questionnaire assessed challenges the young agripreneurs faced based on six major areas pertaining to their business: land, farm input, market, management, finance, and environment (Figure 2). Of all the agripreneurs, 84% reported that they faced environmental challenges. Environmental challenges referred to as climate variabilities, including rising temperature, novel food-borne pathogens and diseases, irregular seasons (shorter winters), unpredictable weather, erratic rainfall, and declining source of irrigation water. Over the past few decades, Bhutan has been experiencing significant changes in weather events (associated with signs of climate change). These include the increased frequency of wind and hailstorms, erratic rains, glacier outburst floods, and appearances of new diseases and pests (Chhogyel & Kumar, 2018; Wangchuk & Wangdi, 2018). Such climate variabilities have severe consequences on Bhutan's agriculture sector. For instance, 10-20% of crop loss in 2019 was attributed to weather events (Chhogyel *et al.*, 2020). Other reported pieces of evidence of climate change were associated with the damaging of crop, agricultural land, and irrigation channels (Chhogyel & Kumar, 2018).

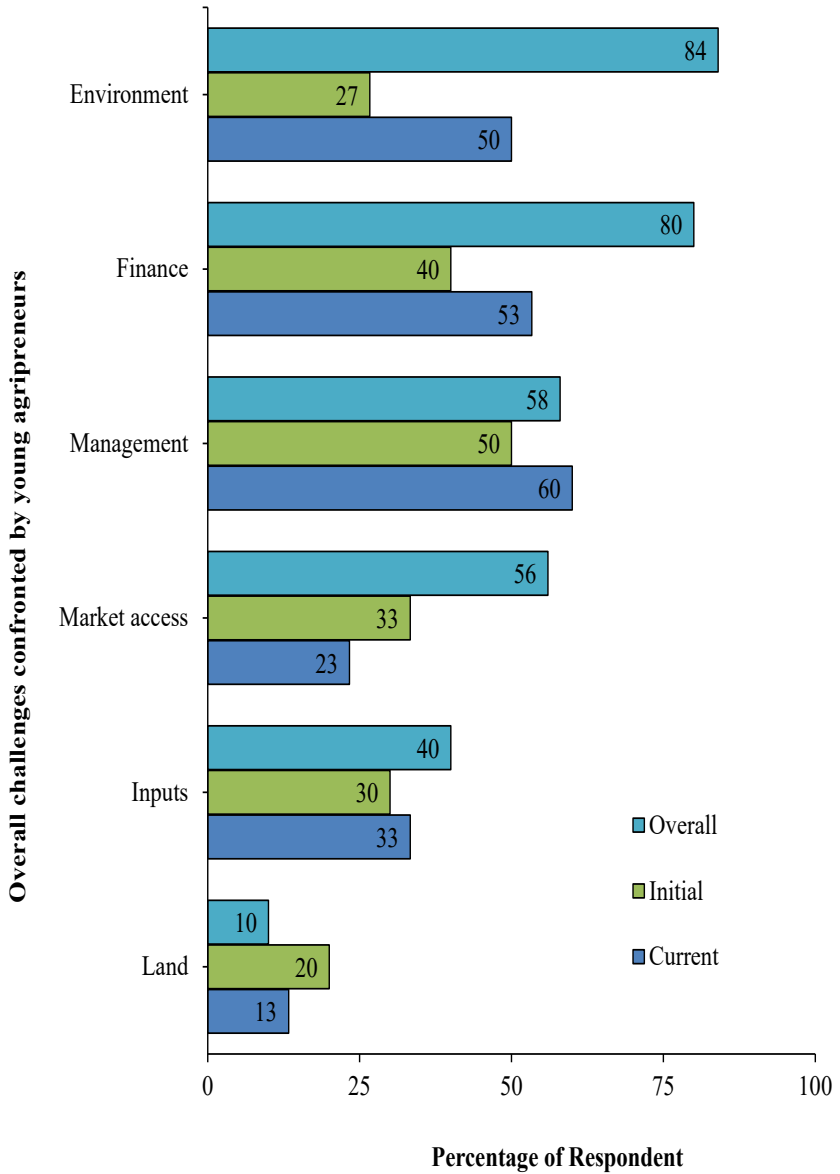
When comparing the degree of environmental challenges encountered when they initiated their agribusiness, compared to the present, half of the young agripreneurs reported that they are experiencing more challenges at present (50%) than in the initial stage (27%). This is consistent with other studies which have reported on Bhutanese farmers perceiving an increase in climate change and its effects compared to the past (Chhogyel *et al.*, 2020; Chhogyel & Kumar, 2018; Wangchuk & Wangdi, 2018; Wangchuk & Siebert, 2013).

With regards to the availability of financial support, 80% of the young agripreneurs reported a lack of support being a hindrance to pursuing agribusiness. In general, financial access is a challenge for many Bhutanese entrepreneurs, especially among youth (Royal Monetary Authority [RMA], 2018; Tshering, 2018). More than half of the young agripreneurs (53%) reported that it was more challenging to access financial support now than when they first entered the business. This reflects a socio-cultural context where young agripreneurs can access financial support from their parents, relatives, and friends when they needed less money in the initial stage, while

experiencing more difficulty getting loans from commercial banks when they are seeking to upscale their business. This is presumably due to the lack of affordable agricultural loans available in the country. Loans provided to the agriculture sector amounted to 5.07 billion BNT, which accounted for only around 5% of the total loans provided in 2017 (RMA, 2018). Apart from the Bhutan Development Bank Limited, which supports rural agrarian sector development, the loans provided to the agriculture sector from domestic commercial banks was less than 1% of the overall loan portfolio as of 2017 (Dorji, 2018). This is largely because loans provided by the commercial banks are unaffordable for farmers (especially for young agripreneurs) due to their high-interest rates (Dorji, 2018). Although Bhutan started the Priority Sector Lending scheme in 2018 and the National Cottage and Small Industry Bank Limited in 2019 to improve financial access (Chezom, 2019; Dorji, 2018), young agripreneurs were deterred from borrowing as they perceived the procedure to be overly complicated and time-consuming. Bhutanese women entrepreneurs have also reported a similar challenge (Tshering, 2018). All statistics mentioned above show poor access to finance by smallholder farmers, especially by the young farmers.

In addition to accessing financial support, 58% of the young agripreneurs reported a lack of management skills as a challenge. Management referred to both crop or livestock production management practices and administrative management. The Bhutan's government provides farmers with subsidised technologies such as high-yielding seeds, improved breeds of livestock, and farm machinery (Wang *et al.*, 2019), which young agripreneurs are only gradually adopting due to the lack of in-depth scientific knowledge on producing crops and rearing animals using these technologies. For instance, the loss of crop to the changing weather (Chhogyel *et al.*, 2020) partly shows a lack of farmers' crop production skills. Some of the young agripreneurs were members of vegetable producer groups. While group members are motivated and goal-oriented when they form the group, they find that managing the group becomes complex and challenging over time. Young agripreneurs also shared challenges in group management, including poor leadership and group cohesion over the years. Sonam and Martwanna (2012) have also reported management issues in farmers' groups in Bhutan. Such factors are reflected in how 60% of the respondents described enterprise management being more challenging at present than it was initially.





**Figure 2: Challenges of Young Agripreneurs**

Another significant challenge for young agripreneurs was market access, and 56% reported it as a challenge. As most Bhutanese farmers practice integrated self-subsistence farming (NSB, 2018), there is limited opportunity to sell farm produce in rural villages. The farm produce, therefore, must be ferried to urban centres, which presents a challenge to some young agripreneurs residing in remote areas. Ferrying farm produces to distant markets comes with its issues due to poor road conditions, particularly during the monsoon season, and produce getting spoiled along the way. It takes at least two days for fresh produce to cover about 600 kilometres from Trashiyangtse to Thimphu–Bhutan’s capital city. The challenges of distributing farm produce in Eastern Bhutan is also pronounced in earlier studies (Moktan *et al.*, 2008; Tobgay & McCullough, 2008).

The establishment of RAMCO, a dedicated institution, located in Mongar, to look after marketing matters in Eastern Bhutan, alludes to marketing challenges in the region. Among other activities, RAMCO forms collective action groups, including youth farmer groups. Such groups enabled young agripreneurs to improve their accessibility to market (Tenzin & Natsuda, 2016). RAMCO also promotes and facilitates contract farming, where RAMCO links farmers’ groups with large-scale consumers such as hotels and schools. If successful, contract farming is a win-win solution for both buyers and sellers (Tenzin & Natsuda, 2016). Further marketing support include the establishment of market sheds and other diversified sales outlets, as well as the development of farm roads in rural districts (MoAF, 2019). This extensive support network could be understood as the reasons why there was a decrease in the number of respondents experiencing marketing challenges currently (23%) compared to the past when they were initiating their business (33%) (Figure 2).

As for challenges accessing farm inputs, 40% of the respondents stated that they faced difficulty. In this study, farm inputs referred to seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and animal feeds. As an agrarian country, Bhutan continues to prioritise agricultural subsidies since the initiation of the first five-year development plan, which included the distribution of farm inputs, to boost agricultural production in rural areas (Wang *et al.*, 2019). The respondents reported that they were able to access necessary farm inputs from the extension offices for free. Those who need farm inputs in larger quantities (e.g., fertilisers) could also access the subsidised inputs

from extension offices on a pre-order basis. Furthermore, respondents also received farm inputs, such as seeds, from CARLEP, ARDC, and RAMCO. Although the import of agro-chemicals is regulated in Bhutan (these are centrally procured and distributed through designated commission agents across the country), there has been a gradual increase in import and distribution of chemical fertilisers and pesticides (MoAF, 2019), indicating improved overall access and use over the decades.

Despite these general trends, however, more respondents (33%) reported having trouble accessing farm inputs at present, compared to the past (30%). A probable reason is that young agripreneurs usually initiate as a small enterprise, requiring fewer farm inputs. However, as their business expands over the years, it became harder to meet the increased demand for farm inputs. This shortage can be understood by the rising number of households pursuing semi-commercial farming in some areas. The extension offices are required to divide the provisioned amount of farm inputs among those with growing demand, causing a shortage. There is also a lack of coordination between the importing agencies and the field extension officials due to lack of proper production planning. The absence of adequate farm inputs will result in decreased productivity and earnings. Low initial returns will affect the youth's long-term outlook on agriculture (Barratt *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, prioritising the younger agripreneurs to access the farm inputs would be one way to encourage them to stay in agribusiness, especially in the initial years. As we found that access to farm inputs was not an issue for most of the respondents, the Bhutanese government and its development partners should maintain their subsidy of farm inputs until they can independently finance themselves. However, because wealthy households are reported to have greater access to subsidised farm inputs than low-income families (Wang *et al.*, 2019), extra care should be given to assure farm inputs be available for the marginalised smallholders as well. Furthermore, Bhutan imports most of its farm inputs (MoAF, 2019), which increases dependency on other countries. Relevant institutions, like the National Seed Centre and the Alpine Seeds, should encourage farmers to produce seeds to improve seed security in the country.

Lastly, we found that 90% of the respondents did not have a problem with land access. Moreover, access to land was an initial challenge for 20% of the respondents, but that number decreased to only 13% at present. We

ascertain that young agripreneurs were pursuing small-scale agribusinesses on their family-owned land, and the prevailing patterns of migration away from the rural eastern regions (Gosai & Sulewski, 2013; Choda, 2012) is contributing to improved access, as empty households (Guangdong), an ageing workforce, and fallow lands increase (NSB, 2018). Hence, fallow lands are readily available for leasing, or some owners temporarily allowing their use for free. The rural land leasing is common in all three selected districts (MoAF, 2019). Marginalised youth could also access the common pool land from the groups. The government of Bhutan further started the land User Rights Certificate (URC) scheme to allow state-owned land to be used for commercial agricultural purposes in rural areas. Under the URC scheme, the beneficiary can continue to use the land for the approved purposes. However, the government will withdraw URC if it is not used or misused (Lamsang, 2016). Similarly, land reforms have enabled youth to access land, which allowed them to rehabilitate communal lands and engage in agricultural value chains in Ethiopia and Malawi (Yami et al., 2019).

## **IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

The current study has several implications to not only encourage but retain youth pursuing agribusiness in the country. The study contributes to an improved understanding of the challenges experienced by young agripreneurs in Bhutan, particularly from the Eastern regions where the aging and depopulation of those in the agriculture sector is an urgent topic of concern. The study shows that 82% of the young agripreneurs are impacted and face challenges by the consequences of climate change for their business. In this regard, the government of Bhutan needs to enhance young agripreneurs' capacity to adapt and mitigate climate change impacts by promoting climate-resilient agriculture practices, or climate-smart agriculture as recommended by Chhogyel and Kumar (2018). The agripreneurs could be trained in sustainable land management practices, given subsidies for climate-resilient crops and animals, pest and disease-resistant crop varieties, infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, and other efforts to improve energy and resource efficiency and autonomy.

Another significant area of challenge was access to financial support. The poor financial access was attributed to high-interest rates from

commercial banks (Dorji, 2018). The government along with financial institutions should, therefore, provide innovative ways to reduce interest rates, especially agriculture loans to young agripreneurs starting their careers. However, there are good prospects as the government has recently initiated supportive scheme such as the Priority Sector Lending to provide low-interest loans to smallholder farmers (Dorji, 2018). Despite such opportunities, loan processing procedures are often complicated, detracting from many taking advantage of the services (Tshering, 2018). Therefore, we strongly suggest the authorities concerned to explore opportunities to simplify the loan processing procedures.

Young agripreneurs reported on the challenges they face in both production and enterprise management. This finding calls for the need to strengthen programmes offered to offer better training programmes or apprenticeship opportunities to gain both technical skills (e.g., cropping, livestock rearing, and climate-smart agriculture practices) as well as managerial skills (e.g., enterprise development, record keeping, and leadership). The ARDC, RAMCO, extension officials, and other relevant authorities could play important roles in this process of training youths entering the agribusiness sector.

As 56% of the respondents reported market access as a challenge, the institution such as the RAMCO should rigorously explore ways to improve farmers' market access. Product processing (value addition), contract farming, cold storage establishment, market infrastructure improvement and similar other efforts have the potential to address market issues.

Addressing these recommendations (forementioned) could encourage and retain youth in the agriculture sector. However, findings in this study are limited to information collected from 50 young agripreneurs' via a cross-sectional self-reported survey in Eastern Bhutan. Young agribusiness entrepreneurs closer to the urban centres in the west, would hypothetically have very different challenges. Further research in the future should consider (1) expanding the sample size as the number of registered young agripreneurs increase, (2) covering more or different districts within Bhutan, and (3) triangulating data from multiple sources (not only based on self-reported data).

## **CONCLUSION**

Agribusiness has the potential to attract and retain young people in the agriculture sector. Many young Bhutanese not pursuing agribusiness indicates the prevalence of challenges that remain unaddressed. Understanding challenges of young agripreneurs and improving their conditions could help address the rising unemployment rates, declining agricultural population, and the increasing reliance on imported foods in the country. By investigating young agripreneurs' challenges in Eastern Bhutan, we focused on the region where issues of depopulation are felt most severely. The results showed that a majority of young agripreneurs were confronted with challenges related to the changing environmental conditions, and financial access. More than half of respondents have experienced difficulty in management and market access. Significantly, the young agripreneurs were facing increasing challenges in the areas of the environment, finance, management, and input access compared to their initial stage of business operation. Although market access was a challenge for more than half of the respondents, the study showed that conditions have improved relative to the past. Moreover, the study found that access to land and farm inputs a relatively minor problem for many young agripreneurs. Therefore, we recommend that the enhancement of knowledge and skills around adaption and mitigation of climate change (e.g., promoting climate-smart agriculture practices), and providing low-interest loans, and simplifying loan processing procedures be prioritised. Furthermore, given the limited knowledge, skill, and experience about the ground realities of the business world, improving access to opportunities for young prospective agripreneurs to gain management skills and marketing know how through training and apprenticeship programmes would be highly beneficial.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors gratefully acknowledge the office of programme management of CARLEP, ARDC, Wengkhar, and RAMCO, Mongar, Bhutan, for providing internship opportunities and assistance. Appreciation also goes to all young farmers and agriculture extension officers who took part in this study. The International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), under the Master's in Development Practice Field Practicum Project, funded this

study. We would like to extend our thanks to Dr. Lucia Rodriguez, Director of Master's in Development Practice, for her support. We wholeheartedly thank Dr. Sonam Tashi and Dr. Mai Kobayashi for proofreading and two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments.

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## Level of Learning Organisation Practices in Two Primary Schools in the Central Melaka District, Melaka

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Received: 9 December 2020

Accepted: 5 March 2021

Online first 16 March 2021

### ABSTRACT

*This preliminary study was conducted to see the level of learning organisation (LO) practice in two primary schools in the district of Melaka Tengah, Melaka. Both schools were selected based on the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) 2019 School Average Grade (GPS). The questionnaire was modified from the Learning Organisation Practices Profile (LOPP) instrument developed by O'Brien (1994) and conducted on 60 respondents from two different schools. The overall questionnaire reliability analysis gave a Cronbach's alpha scale of 0.78. The data were analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) For Windows 25 programme using descriptive analysis. The findings showed that the most dominant LO practice is the system and structure aspects of work, followed by staff development and performance, and the lowest is in the leadership aspect. The overall results indicated that the level of LO practice in the schools studied is still at a weak level.*

**Keywords:** learning organisation, school performance



## INTRODUCTION

Education basically plays a crucial role in producing a better quality of life. To ensure the quality of the education system in Malaysia is always improved and able to produce the desired human capital, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has introduced the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025. This plan has sparked a transformation in the national education landscape. The transformation and change that took place is in line with the development of the industrial revolution 4.0 which is seen to give emphasis to the Internet of Thing (IoT) (Abas & Basri, 2019). To ensure that all the goals outlined in the MEB are successfully fulfilled, school organisations need to change immediately in line with the current changes in order to produce quality human capital that can meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For a school organisation to remain relevant and competitive, it needs to inculcate a culture of learning in daily work practices to improve school quality (Spillane & Hopkins, 2013). Along with changes based on information resources, school organisations are now not only required to become a teaching organisation but need to immediately transform into a learning organisation (Fedai *et al.*, 2016). The practice of LO in a school organisation is a practice that encourages fellow teachers to share and exchange information with each other and will enable the school to be a beneficial platform for the learning process to take place among teachers (Gouédard *et al.*, 2019).

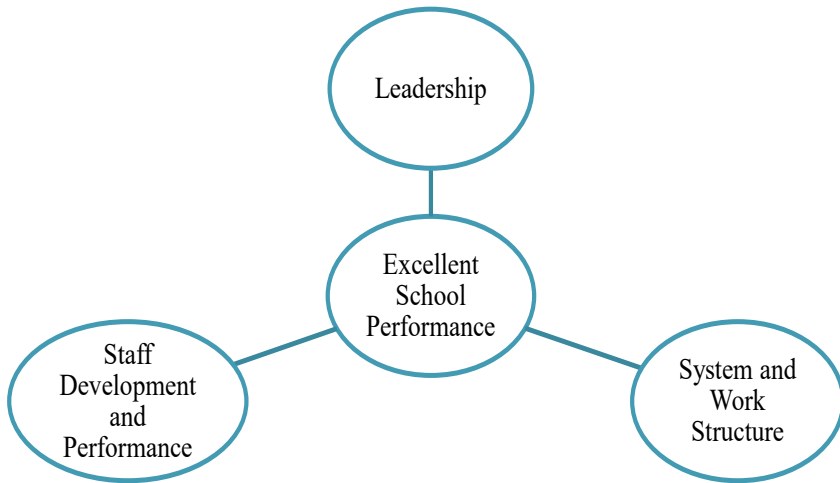
The changes taking place in the educational landscape have required teachers as the primary human resources in school organisations to change the teaching practices (Erdem & Uçar, 2013). Changes in the teaching and learning process to produce better performance can occur through continuous learning and development implemented in the workplace (Lecat, 2019). As the primary human resource in schools, teachers need to continually develop their professionalism and abilities to ensure that teachers' role as important pillars in the student learning process remains relevant. If school organisations want to optimise and maintain learning practices among teachers in order to enhance teacher professionalism, school organisations need to immediately turn into a genuine LO (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). As a LO, schools have a comprehensive support system to help develop teacher professionalism (James & McCormick, 2009).

Besides that, various benefits that school organisations will gain when they transformed into a LO. The practice of LO in school organisations' enables school organisations to survive and continue to thrive despite being overwhelmed by turbulent environments as a LO has a structure that is adaptable and adaptive to dealing with changing environments (Ghadermarzi *et al.*, 2020). Through the learning process in the organisation, the knowledge of the organisation's members can be enhanced and contribute to the development of organisational productivity (Ghadermarzi *et al.*, 2020). Besides that, the practice of LO in the organisation can also provide a good influence in the aspect of teaching of the teachers that results in an improvement to students from both cognitive and behavioural aspects.

## **Research Background**

The transformation in the national education landscape has impacted school organisations as an organisation responsible for producing human capital that can drive the country's progress and fulfil the country's dream of becoming a developed country. The transformation and change driven by globalisation and industrial revolution are a very clear indicator for a school organisation to transform into a genuine LO quickly. A school organisation's success depends on the capability of the school organisation to make it good at learning and transforming into a LO (Mohd-zainal *et al.*, 2017).

Through the practice of LO in school organisations, schools can implement the best methods and measures to manage change, innovate and to move forward (Fedai *et al.*, 2016). In fact, LO practice is also seen as the most effective mechanism and has the highest competitive advantage in ensuring the organisation's survival (Daryani & Ardabili, 2014). Efforts to produce schools that have excellent performance, need to be strengthened in three main aspects: the pillars of school performance achievement, namely leadership, system and work structure and staff development and performance.



**Figure 1: Three Main Aspects That are the Pillars of School Performance**

The leadership aspect plays a significant role in ensuring outstanding school performance, especially in developing innovation in members of education-based organisations including schools (Lewis *et al.*, 2018; Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017). School organisation leaders need to promote a culture capable of improving school performance (Kearney & Gebert, 2009). Learning culture in school organisations can help improve school performance. Therefore, school leaders need to contribute to the learning process in the organisation that can help improve organisational performance (Southworth & Southworth, 2015).

School leadership also needs to create a conducive atmosphere and able to support the organisation's learning process and produce positive change in the organisation (Haiyan *et al.*, 2017; Robinson *et al.*, 2008). The leadership in the organisation is also responsible for ensuring that effective communication exists in the organisation in ensuring that the process of knowledge transfer can take place effectively in the organisation (Gino *et al.*, 2010). In addition, school organisation leaders need to play a role in increasing motivation and striving to develop the potential of organisational members in meeting the organisation's needs (Randel *et al.*, 2018). Organisational leaders also need to know and identify appropriate methods and approaches to generate positive change among teachers to

produce the best teaching practices (Kaniuka, 2012). School organisation leaders should also strive to improve the skills and knowledge of school organisation members.

However, findings from previous studies showed that principals who serve in schools in Malaysia tend to adopt a centralised leadership style (Boon & Hasan, 2011). Furthermore, the implementation of teacher duties in schools is usually guided solely by the school management handbook and annual calendar that has been planned at the beginning of the year (Ghani *et al.*, 2013). Thus, more emphasis on duties, discipline, strict procedures, and strict work rules are given and less space for human resources to be creative and innovate, are often practised in school organisations (Boon & Hasan, 2011)

The second aspect that needs to be emphasized is the system and work structure. To produce a school organisation with an outstanding performance, school organisations need to transition from a top-down strategy to a bottom-up (Doyle & Johnson, 2019). Through LO practices in organisations, an 'organic' shared learning system will be practiced instead of bureaucratic practices that focus only on individual tendencies and competition (Bui & Baruch, 2010). The practice of LO in a school organisation also oversees the system and structure of work that depends on the top management and involves the resources and talents of all members of the organisation in achieving organisational goals (Shin *et al.*, 2017). In the LO, no member will be left out in taking responsibility alone because the practice of LO emphasizes the continuous learning process with the application of several important values namely cooperation, team learning and shared vision that occurs at the individual, team and organisational levels (Yang, Watkins, & Marsick, 2004).

In order to ensure that the school organisation transforms into a genuine LO, school organisations need to let go of some behaviours that do not cooperate and do not support the knowledge acquisition process and instead must apply new practices that include learning culture, continuous experimentation, network intimacy, information systems, reward systems, practices human resources and trust of leaders (Odor, 2018). The practice of LO also fosters the view or assumption that failure is an opportunity for members of the organisation to learn and improve the organisation's results

and performance. LO practices also require the organisation members to explore and implement different strategies and initiatives to ensure that the organisation members can face the inevitable challenges and changes that need to be faced (Rana, Ardichvili & Polesello, 2016).

The last aspect that plays an important role in producing outstanding school performance is staff development and performance. The most important staff or human resource in a school organisation is a teacher. Teachers are the pillars that play a very important role in student learning (Dahl, 2019). Human resource management in schools, namely teachers, is a key pillar that can improve school performance (Vekeman *et al.*, 2015). Teachers play a role in delivering the content of the subject and serve as a developer, strengthener, and builder of student skills (Firdaus *et al.*, 2016). Because of the great responsibility they bear, teachers today are urged to be 'highly knowledgeable workers' (Schleicher, 2012). Teachers are also required to constantly improve their knowledge and eventually improve their profession (Prenger *et al.*, 2019).

In fact, most organisations, researchers and practitioners in education have sought to determine the factors that produce quality teachers (Paul *et al.*, 2020). This is because, in a dynamic and non-static world, teachers in schools need to be involved in the learning process and continuous development in the workplace (Lecat, 2019). Thus, learning among teachers in the workplace involves three main categories: learning from others, learning from non-interpersonal sources and learning from oneself (Noe *et al.*, 2013).

## **Problem Statement**

The concept of LO is a well-known concept in the field of organisational management. It has been examined in various previous studies that clearly show that LO practices influence organisational performance which includes behaviour, cognitive, knowledge management, and finance (Goh & Blake, 2015). Due to the various successes achieved by the private sector due to knowledge development and promotion of innovation, organisations under the public sector such as schools are also motivated to turn into a genuine LO (Khan & Khan, 2019). The application of LO practices allows



organisations to change in line with the environmental landscape as long as continuous learning becomes the core of school organisations' work (Doyle & Johnson, 2019). Members of the organisation will try to find the best method in carrying out the learning process and achieve compatibility with a constantly changing environment (Daryani & Zirak, 2015).

Organisations that can learn and become knowledgeable organisations are said to have a competitive advantage over other competitors (Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017). Competitive advantage will be possessed when school organisations are able to be more flexible and adapt more quickly to the changes taking place in the environmental landscape (Jokić *et al.*, 2012). A school organisation needs to build a learning culture within the organisation and become a LO (Gil & Carrillo, 2016). The increase in knowledge that occurs in the organisation through the learning process will help increase the organisation's productivity and produce better performance (Ghadermarzi *et al.*, 2020). In school organisations, the application of LO practices can improve organisational performance and innovation that ultimately enable organisations to achieve long-term goals (Odor, 2018).

Although many benefits will be gained by school organisations when applying LO practices in daily work, the concepts and practices of LO in organisations are mostly only studied and voiced among developed countries compared to developing countries such as Malaysia (Abenga, 2018). According to previous findings, there are only a few empirical studies involving schools in Southeast Asian countries (Retna & Tee, 2006). The findings of previous studies also show that there are still many school organisations in Malaysia that have not yet implemented LO in the school organisations (Sabariah Sharif *et al.*, 2013).

The concept of OP practice is still considered new and poorly understood in Malaysia, especially at the organisational level of primary and secondary schools (Alzahrani *et al.*, 2016). Although studies on LO have been developed and conducted for almost 30 years, only a few empirical data focused on LO practice among primary and secondary school teachers (Fullan, 2011). Studies that focus on LO practices and organisational performances are still lacking and demanding more studies to look at LO practices and their relationship with school performance. Thus, this pilot study was conducted to see the level of implementation of LO in two

primary schools in Melaka Tengah district. This study was also conducted to determine the reliability of the items contained in the Learning Organisation Practices Profile (LOPP), an instrument developed by O'Brien (1994). This pilot study was also conducted to see the suitability of the items found in the LOPP instrument to measure the implementation of LO practice in school organisations. This LOPP instrument is oriented to western countries and is often used in profit-based organisations such as business.

## **Research Objective**

In particular, the objective of this study is:

- a) To measure the learning organisation practices in two primary schools in the central Melaka district, Melaka.

## **LEARNING ORGANISATION**

### **Learning Process in an Organisation**

Man-made organisations are an ecosystem that constantly interacts with the environment and is influenced by current developments' rapidity. This is in line with the open system theory perspective that can explain various organisations' behaviour, including schools. Schools are an open organisation with a more complex additional effective than a closed system (Wahidin, 2013). Transformation and change in the education landscape is a new situation caused by the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) in an organisation's management aspect. This transformation and change have greatly impacted the organisation, including school organisation (Van Wart *et al.*, 2017). This situation requires the organisation to always be prepared to face challenges to maintain its continuity (Pedler & Burgoyne, 2017).

Most researchers and organisational management experts emphasize the need for organisations to transform into the LO to cope with change and maintain organisational sustainability (Norliah Kudus, Safiah Sidek, Sufean Hussin, 2011). In fact, the idea of school organisation as the LO has long been discussed and described as an internal process that can

contribute to school organisation's success (Harris & Jones, 2018). The most important asset of an organisation is the underlying human resources. The human resources in an organisation need to constantly learn continuously to enable the organisation to achieve the organisation's goals efficiently and effectively and to survive and grow despite the challenges of a rapidly changing environment (Marquardt, 2002).

By practising continuous learning, organisations are able to adapt and constantly change in line with economic, social, scientific, technological and environmental advances to remain sustainable (Firdaus, 2016). This ultimately keeps the organisation relevant and trusted by all stakeholders. Therefore, the practice of learning organisation emphasizes the learning output of human resources from the aspect of new knowledge and knowledge enhancement to ensure that this practice can be implemented successfully in an organisation (Garvin *et al.*, 2008).

### **Human Resources as an Asset of Knowledge**

Among the important factors that influence the organisation's performance is the human resource attitude that associates with the organisational change or more precisely the attitude in dealing with the organisational change (Susanty *et al.*, 2013). If the human resources in the organisation have a positive attitude towards all educational landscape changes, the school organisation will be able to achieve the desired goals together (Eby *et al.*, 2000). Members of the organisation who have a positive attitude and acceptance of change in the organisation will be valuable human resources to the organisation (Thi & Hai, 2019).

Organisational change is transferring an organisation from existing practices to a much better practice to improve organisational performance (Lunenburg, 2010). Organisational change management can be considered as a systematic process in which the organisation conceptualises, implements and evaluates change efforts to obtain the desired results (Hassan, 2018). Besides that, organisations practice change management is important to improve an organisation's performance and productivity (Mellor, 2018).

Furthremore, human resources have always played a very important role in the organisation, especially in the ever-changing complex

environment as it is today (Thi & Hai, 2019). Various past studies have shown that organisational change initiatives' failure can generally stem from the negative attitudes of organisational members towards those changes that include fear and uncertainty and ultimately can cause stress, reduce confidence levels, and lower the organisational commitment levels (Elias, 2009).

Thus, change management in the organisation emphasizes changes in the quality of thinking and organisational members' behaviour that can be achieved through LO practices. This is because the practice of LO emphasizes an organisation that facilitates all its members' learning process and produces a change in its members consciously (Pedler & Burgoyne, 2017).

## **Learning Organisation Concept and Theory**

The concept of LO is a concept that has been discussed for more than three decades. However, this concept is still considered new in the concept of management in Malaysia. This concept was originally introduced in business-based organisations, but in line with the current circulation, many researchers suggest that the concept of LO can be applied in the management of education-based organisations such as schools (Fullan, 2011). There are also other terms used to describe the concept of learning organisation such as 'Learning Company' (Pedler & Burgoyne, 2017) and 'Knowledge Creating Company' (Nonaka, 1991).

LO is a practice that emphasizes the process of acquiring and developing a knowledge base. In addition, LO is also an organisational adaptation to environmental changes that occur due to globalisation and advances in technology. According to researchers, LO is also a theory that emphasizes the improvement of knowledge of an organisation through the learning of skills and knowledge to enable the organisation to remain relevant and remain competitive despite being pressured by complex global competition.

This LO practice emphasizes two important aspects, namely goals and procedures. Goals emphasize the desired achievement or outcome,

while the procedure refers to various methods such as forming a new way of thinking and growing, developing aspirations, and allowing members to learn continuously and collectively. In other words, LO is described as an organisation whose members learn continuously and change existing practices for the better to ensure the organisation's survival. Thus, it can be concluded that LO refers to a paradigm shift or new perspective to produce systematic organisational management, cognitive change and the unification of individual roles to teams within the organisation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study uses a descriptive design and is conducted using a survey approach. A descriptive design of research refers to using statistics to describe the characteristics of a group of samples (Boon & Hasan, 2011). Quantitative data were obtained to measure the level of learning organisation practice in two primary schools in Melaka Tengah, Melaka. In this study, a questionnaire was used to obtain the data needed for this study. Questionnaires were used in this study as this method is suitable for the survey method because it can measure attitudes, opinions, or achievements with many variables.

The conceptual framework of LO practice in this study is adopted from the Learning Organisation Practices Profile (LOPP) developed by O'Brien (1994). These instruments are more pragmatic and holistic and therefore, suitable to be used in measuring the practice of learning organisation in schools. This LOPP instrument has been widely used in studies involving LO in private organisations, factory and corporate management compared to education-based organisations. According to O'Brien (1994), there are twelve aspects support implementing OP practices in an organisation. In this study, the researcher divided the LO practices into five levels: very weak, weak, slightly weak, slightly good and good. This learning organisation level is an adaptive version initially designed by Shahrin in his research entitled *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia: Towards a Learning Organisation* (Boon & Hasan, 2011).

## Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the instrument meets the objectives and can measure the level of implementation of the learning organisation, this study used a questionnaire that has been previously developed. This pilot study was conducted to ensure the reliability of the instrument used in this study. This pilot study was also implemented to ensure that the respondents understood the questions easily and appropriately.

## Research Instrument

The questionnaire method is an option in the implementation of this study because it is an appropriate instrument to use in the survey study as this method is easy to get respondents' cooperation (Jamilah Ahmad & Yusof Boon, 2011). The questionnaire's main purpose is to convey basic information and construction of the respondent profile and explain the issues that are being studied (Boon & Hasan, 2011). In this study, the researcher divided the LO into five levels: very weak, weak, slightly weak, a little good and good.

The questionnaire for this study is based on the questionnaire developed by O'Brien (1994), the Learning Organisation Practices Profile (LOPP). However, some modifications and additions have been made to some items in this questionnaire to better suit the organisation's socio-cultural studies under study. In fact, researchers, linguists, and field experts have researched the instruments to maintain the validity of each item to coincide with the goals of the study. The interpretation of the mean range is made according to the scale used as below:

**Table 1: Interpretation of the Mean Range**

Mean range	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.89	Very weak
1.90 – 2.69	Weak
2.70 – 3.49	A little weak
3.50 – 4.29	A little good
4.30 – 5.00	Good

The use of a five-point scale has high reliability compared to other types of scales. For this reason, the response scale used for this questionnaire used a five-point type Likert scale of 1,2,3,4 and 5. Each score has the following meaning:

**Table 2: Five-point Likert Scale**

Score	Score Meaning
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Slightly disagree
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

The design of the questionnaire is as below:

**Table 3: Design of the Questionnaire**

Section	Items
A Demographics of Respondents (six items)	Demographics of respondents. Covers gender, job grade, job type, number of years of service, level of education, name of school served.
Aspects: Leadership	
B1 (five items)	Vision and strategy
B2 (five items)	Executive practices
B3 (five items)	Management practices
B4 (five items)	Organisational climate
Aspects: System and Work Structure	
B5 (five items)	Work systems and organisations
B6 (five items)	Information flow
B7 (five items)	Individual and group practices
B8 (five items)	Work processes
Aspects: Staff Development and Performance	
B9 (five items)	Performance goals and feedback
B10 (five items)	Training and education
B11 (five items)	Rewards and recognition
B12 (five items)	Individual and group development

The pilot study was conducted beforehand in order to test its reliability. The test results using Cronbach's Alpha method with a reliability value of less than 0.60 are considered weak, 0.61 to 0.79 are acceptable and values greater than 0.80 are considered high. The validity of the content and instrument construct did not arise in this study as the items in this questionnaire were adapted from previous studies using the similar questionnaires.

**Data Analysis**

This study's data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software 25. For data analysis, descriptive statistics describe the percentage frequency, mean and arrangement of data in tabular form. The table below is a detail breakdown of the data analysis collected from the questionnaire based on the study's objectives.

**Table 4: Research Objective and Data Analysis**

<b>Research Objective</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
To measure the level of Learning Organisation practices in two primary schools in the central Melaka district, Melaka.	Descriptive statistical analysis to describe the percentage frequency and the mean value of the mean

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**Descriptive Analysis of the Level of Learning Organisation Practices in Two Primary Schools in the Central Melaka district, Melaka**

From the descriptive analysis obtained, it can be concluded that the level of Learning Organisation practice among primary school teachers in the two primary schools in the district of Melaka Tengah, Melaka state is still at a weak level with an average of 2.67. Organisational Climate is at the highest level of 3.02 and the Learning Organisation practice, is at a slightly weak level. There are eight Learning Organisation practices at a slightly weak level: executive practices, organisational climate, work systems and organisations, information and information flow, work processes,



performance goals and feedback of individual and group practices and training and education. In contrast, four learning organisation practices are at a weak level, namely vision and strategy, management practices, rewards and recognition and development of individuals and groups. learning organisation practices that are at the lowest level is management practices with a mean value of 1.87.

**Table 5: Level of Learning Organisation Practices in Two Primary Schools in the Central Melaka District, Melaka**

No	Learning Organisation Practices	Min	Standard deviation	Level of Practice
<b>Aspects: Leadership</b>				
1	Vision and strategy	2.42	0.98	Weak
2	Executive practices	2.78	0.69	A little weak
3	Management practices	1.87	0.43	Weak
4	Organisational climate	3.02	0.65	A little weak
	Mean	2.52		Weak
<b>Aspects: System and Work Structure</b>				
5	Work systems and organisations	2.70	0.53	A little weak
6	Information flow	2.83	0.46	A little weak
7	Individual and group practices	2.82	0.39	A little weak
8	Work processes	2.85	0.63	A little weak
	Mean	2.80		A little weak
<b>Aspects: Staff Development and Performance</b>				
9	Performance goals and feedback	2.78	0.49	A little weak
10	Training and education	2.80	0.40	A little weak
11	Rewards and recognition	2.57	0.81	Weak
12	Individual and group development	2.57	0.59	Weak
	Mean	2.68		Weak
Average		2.67		Weak

## DISCUSSION

### Level of Learning Organisation Practices

Based on the findings, organisational climate recorded the highest learning organisational practice based on the two schools. The aspects in the organisational climate such as sharing opinions and thoughts among members of the organisation, enjoyment of the task entrusted, cooperation between members of the organisation, hospitality and caring among members of the organisation were practices implemented in these schools. These practices are very important and should be implemented in school organisations as these practices greatly affect the success of the learning process in a school organisation (Gil & Mataveli, 2016). This is in line with past scholars' opinion that the organisational climate aspect is an important foundation in the development of learning organisation practices (Song & Kolb, 2013). The climate applied in schools can also contribute to constraint factors and motivating factors to improve school performance and can be an effective catalyst to enable school organisations to change for the better (Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017).

Besides that, the school as a learning organisation places great emphasis on excellence and high ethical behaviour, encourages knowledge sharing and learning processes among members of the organisation and each member of the organisation has high motivation and desire to contribute knowledge and talents to realise organisational goals (Shin, Picken, & Dess, 2017). The climate in a learning organisation should always cultivate a culture of learning that refers to the synergistic resulting from the formation and nurturing of interconnected environments and encourage learning as a professional way of working (Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017).

The practice of learning organisation in schools is very demanding to build and develop constructive and motivating consultations for the process of sharing skills and experience among members of the organisation that will contribute to the existence of a genuine learning organisation (Ghadermarzi *et al.*, 2020). The school organisation's climate that is able to ensure the effectiveness of the school organisation as a learning organisation will unite learning and work continuously and systematically aimed at supporting the

continuous improvement of individuals, groups, and organisations (Odor, 2018). Schools as a learning organisation emphasise that mistakes made by members of the organisation are not considered a failure but rather seen as an opportunity to learn in improving the organisation's results and performance (Odor, 2018). Previous opinions from scholars also state that the learning organisation is an organisation that has its philosophy and resolution to create sustainable and lasting solutions and results (Khunsoonthornkit & Panjakajornsak, 2018). In a learning organisation, the practice of exchanging views and opinions among members of the organisation is strongly encouraged to help improve and improve organisational performance.

The analysis of the data obtained through this pilot study shows that the management practices recorded the lowest mean of only 1.87 which is weak. The criteria contained in management practices include administrators encouraging self-development and continuous learning among members of the organisation, administrators helping teachers combine and apply what they have learned, effective communication between administrators and teachers with regards to teaching development and progress needs, administrators encourage processes to contribute ideas and administrators admit their own mistakes are seen to be at a very low level of practice and needs to be improved to ensure that the school succeeds in becoming a learning organisation. To ensure that the school succeeds in becoming a learning organisation, the administrator's role is undeniable. School administrators need to build and cultivate a learning culture among teachers in schools (Haiyan, Walker, & Xiaowei, 2017). School administrators also need to create a conducive environment that is able to support the learning process in the organisation and produce positive and lasting change in the organisation (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The line of administrators who lead the school must create an effective communication system between members of the organisation to enable the process of knowledge transfer to other group members to take place effectively and efficiently (Gino *et al.*, 2010). Administrators also need to motivate their organisation members to go beyond the possibilities in the daily work process (Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002).

The line of administrators who manage a school organisation also needs to know and identify appropriate methods and approaches to generate change among teachers to encourage teachers to produce best teaching

practices (Kaniuka, 2012). This is because administrators need to fulfil the important trust in improving the organisation's skills and knowledge. In addition, the administration should also set the best example in a continuous manner so that they continue to learn continuously and always convey what they learn to other members of the school organisation (Odor, 2018). In fact, the line of administrators who drive school organisations also play the most significant role in fostering a school culture that supports and enables learning activities to be implemented in the organisation's members and ultimately (Klar & Brewer, 2013). School administrators also play a very important role in increasing the organisation's motivation and are always a source of inspiration to the other members (Khan & Khan, 2019).

For the school to succeed as a learning organisation, the school organisation needs to emphasize 12 practices in the learning organisation according to the LOPP model developed by O'Brien (1994), which includes three main aspects: leadership, systems and work processes as well as staff development and performance. However, based on the findings, all 12 learning organisation practices are at a weak and relatively weak level, so it is the responsibility of all school organisation members to improve learning organisation practices to strengthen school performance. More attention should be given to four practices that have a lower mean value than the average mean value of vision and strategy, management practices, rewards and recognition, and individual and group development. Furthermore, strengthening in applying these four practices of the learning organisation is very important in ensuring the schools' effectiveness studied as a learning organisation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Changes and transformations in the educational landscape driven by the industrial revolution 4.0 and globalisation demand schools as the main organisation in producing quality education to transform into a genuine learning organisation immediately. In order to transform a school organisation from a teaching organisation into a learning organisation that demands a learning process not only takes place among students but also occurs among the teachers and administrators is not an easy aspiration. Consolidation in 12 Learning Organisation practices is crucial in ensuring the school's effectiveness as a learning organisation.

This study's findings indicate that the level of learning organisation practices in both schools is still at a weak level and needs to be given serious attention. All learning organisations' practices need to be applied to ensure that school functions remain relevant and not outdated. Schools as a learning organisation can also provide a competitive advantage to school organisations and ultimately help schools to boost their performance and excellence. Hence all school organisations need to be committed to immediately transform into a learning organisation as this practice enables school organisations to be more flexible and adaptive to the changes and transformations that need to be faced in the world today.

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## The Effect of Leader's Interpersonal Communication Skills on Nurses Innovative Behaviour

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Received: 27 January 2021

Accepted: 10 March 2021

Online first: 29 March 2021

### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between leaders' interpersonal communication skills and nurses' innovative behaviour. Moreover, innovative behaviour is essential for nurses in today's dynamic healthcare systems whereby, the interpersonal communication skill has become an increasingly important factor in enhancing innovative behaviour. This study is based on the conceptual framework of interpersonal communication skills, innovative behaviour, and perceived trustworthiness. Using stratified sampling technique, questionnaires were distributed to 246 nurses' grade U29 in three public state hospitals in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Since this is a correlational study, a quantitative research method is employed to determine the existing relationship between the variables. Findings indicated that the head nurses implemented moderately all the five components of interpersonal communication skills. The existence of perceived trustworthiness was found to improve the interaction between both parties to transform nurses to generate innovation in their work. The study concluded that interpersonal communication skills are required to be implemented by leaders in enhancing nurses' innovative behaviour.*



*Keywords: interpersonal communication skills, innovative behaviour, perceived trustworthiness, nurses, leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's healthcare organisations nurses' jobs are not specified to only cure patients but also to handle multiple rare diseases. Their new duties are beyond the expectations although they are equipped with Nursing Acts and they are following the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to achieve their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that have been outlined by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in serving their clients and patients (MOH, 2011). The global challenges and the burden of disease continue to present new demands on the health care delivery systems (Amo, 2006a). Nurses must also have advanced knowledge in medical instruments and technology in order to form a significant drive to change in clinical practice that demands new skills and techniques as well as new ways of working (Huber, 2014). Besides, nurses are the 'ambassadors' that reflect the public healthcare organisational image as they are always dealing with patients on a daily basis and thus, leaders have to treat them well.

The government has also invested in a lot of efforts and costs including allowances and intensive training, to improve and upgrade the nurses' quality of work, however the leaders' disability when approaching and communicating with their subordinates will affect the subordinates' quality of work and poor services to patients. In addition, subordinates will behave accordingly when they are perceived as trustworthy by their leaders. Besides that, nurses need to consider cost-effectiveness as a significant driver for innovation when responding to varying patients' expectations and values (Xerri & Stuard, 2017). Nurses also spend a lot of time in meeting and communicating with patients (Baumann, 2011; Tung, Akkadechanunt & Chontawan, 2014). Almost all of their working time and activities involved dealing with their leaders, collaborating with doctors, team members, patients, clients as well as carrying out procedures related to the health care delivery systems (MOH, 2014;2017). They are the front-liners of the organisation and the mirror of the government sector's image because they always deal with clients every day (Aiken, 2010; MOH, 2010;2018).



The innovations in nursing profession can solve some of the rising issues related to the healthcare delivery system (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). The essence of creating innovative behaviour is the capability of nurses to operate the innovation technology systems and creating a repository of best practices in nursing informatics (Effken, Weaver, Cochran, Androwich & O'Brain, 2016). Since innovative behaviour is complex, when employees respond to innovation, a correlation exists between innovation and sustainable development (Janssen, 2005).

## Background

Past evidence has shown that leaders' position is the power source to influence the follower's work behaviour (Khalili, Muenjohn & McMurray, 2015). By using their power, leaders can exert participatory leadership to influence subordinates to behave innovatively (Khalili *et al.*, 2015) and to seek collaboration with subordinates through dialogue and subordinates' engagement (Howaldt, Oeij, Dhondt & Fruytier, 2016). With that emphasis, the head of nurse should act as an educator to manage the learning environment rather than being the main conduit of information to subordinates (Knol & Van Linge, 2009). Through the greater demands of accountability in the nursing profession, leaders need to demonstrate good examples and delegate effectively to gain subordinates' trust and achieve the organisational goals (Tung, Akkadechanunt & Chontawan, 2014).

Nevertheless, this statement has not yet to be justified when it comes to nurses working in public hospitals in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. Due to the regulations and Nursing Acts that have already existed, the barrier that could reduce the spirit and self-esteem of nurses were not frequently discussed (Darma Tasyiah, Siti Asiah & Abd Kadir, 2016; MOH, 2010;2017). Only few studies have been conducted on innovative behaviour in nursing studies. Additionally, the factors that are associated with nurses' innovative behaviour have not been investigated in depth.

The sources from the Human Resource Management (HRM) reported that about 70% of nurses spent time performing functions that did not call upon their professional training, while care activities requiring their skills and expertise were often left undone (MOH, 2017). Consistently, nurses are required to complete the tasks assigned as their KPI benchmarks and should

be achieved excellently. Thus, the only form of communication that leaders have with nurses is only in the form of order and instruction (Darma Tasiyah *et al.*, 2016; MOH, 2010;2017). This paper seeks to examine the factor that could influence the nurses to behave innovatively in their daily work.

A model of innovative behaviour was adapted from Janssen (2000) and interpersonal communication skills was adapted from Jablin and Krone (1994) whereas, perceived trustworthiness utilise Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) model of organisational trust.

### **Innovative Behaviour**

Based on past literature, innovation can be defined as the industrial power in creating a change and it can be interpreted as any potential factor in creating new resources, processes, or values in the organisation (Janssen, 2000; Thomas, Seifert & Joyner, 2016). Janssen (2000) identified three theoretical approaches to innovation behaviour. It consists of idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realisation which refers to championing and application of efforts, building up the coalition and finding support for the novel ideas and, introducing concrete change through realising the new ideas that are oriented to transforming work environment (Janssen, 2000). These are new and useful ideas, processes, products or procedures that require organisational and management support. Often, it is seen as a task that is not required for nurses to meet under their required performance indicators (Janssen, 2000; 2005).

Specifically, leaders' support includes emotional support, instrumental support for technology advancement or task and social support (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996). With these recognitions, subordinates will then initiate more innovations and be more productive in their work (Khodakarami & Zakaria, 2015; Yan, Yang & Zhang, 2016).

### **Interpersonal Communication Skills**

The interpersonal communication skills in this study are defined as the skills possessed by head nurses that could influence subordinates to act innovatively through face-to-face interaction. It can be utilised through nonverbal and oral communication channels (Jablin and Krone, 1994). The

five dimensions used include awareness of self and self-disclosure, self-expression and clarity, awareness of others, acceptance of feedback and evaluation and, coping with feelings and differences of leaders.

The first thing that leaders need to emphasise is in improving and enhancing their two-way communication practices successfully in order to create the nurses' innovation mood and adapt to the nurses' work environment (Darma Tasiyah *et al.*, 2016). Only with effective communication, that the working style of subordinates can be altered to create the spirit of innovative ideas (Jablin & Krone, 1994, Thomas *et al.*, 2016).

### **Perceived Trustworthiness**

In this study, nurses' perceived trustworthiness is referred to as the subordinates' (nurses) perception of their leaders (head nurses) based on three conditions that lead to trust which are ability, benevolence, and integrity as defined by Mayer *et al.* (1995).

Once subordinates feel that their leaders really listen to them, their trust and performance will increase (Tung *et al.*, 2014). The undeniable fact is that every rule and act must be communicated and disseminated to subordinates in order to get their participation (Broca & Ferreira, 2016).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The review of previous studies shows lack of communication practices among leaders to influence subordinate's innovative behaviour in health care organisations. However, Scott and Bruce (1994) found a correlation between innovative behaviour and leadership roles. Janssen (2005) stated that subordinates' innovative behaviour is essential in creating organisational effectiveness especially in terms of serving high-quality work, and good hospitality (Lachman, Glasgow, & Donnelly, 2009).

Innovation by nurses within health care is important in addressing the problems present within the current system with various unexpected diseases (Amo, 2006a; Tung *et al.*, 2014). The good implementation of interpersonal communication skills shown by leaders, the intentional

behaviour to produce or apply new ideas of procedures, products, service or practices in health care could be realised successfully without prejudice. Baumann (2011) stated that nurses are the key component of the health care system who can stimulate positive aura while giving their commitment to the working environment. This provide innovative solutions to improve quality and safety of patients.

A survey conducted by Kessel, Weber, and Kratzer (2012) on 160 healthcare professionals working in Germany's healthcare organisations indicates that by giving encouragement to nurses their innovative work behaviour increases particularly to implementing new solutions for patients because at that stage, coordination and mutual adjustment with other healthcare professionals are needed. The existence of guidelines for operational processes contributes to the innovative work behaviour by integrating the stages of knowledge acquisition, idea generation, and solution implementation. They found evidence that physicians are more active in acquiring knowledge, whereas nurses show more initiative in generating new ideas. Innovative behaviour not only consist of the initiation and realisation of novel approaches but also of the accumulation of knowledge taking as a basis for the aforementioned activities (Kessel *et al.*, 2012).

Tung *et al.* (2014) conducted a study on 384 nurses in tertiary at General Hospital in the central region of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Their results showed that there was a significant relationship between proactive and innovative behaviour and a significant relationship between creative efficacy and innovative behaviour. The overall score of innovative behaviour among nurses was 21.20 with SD = 3.19 indicating a low level of innovative behaviour among nurses. The nurses argued that the lack of interaction between leaders and nurses caused them to have less opportunity to show their ideas. Nurses argued that their leader entrust them to carry out only routine or direct care to patients. They were not asked to give ideas or not given the opportunity to handle problems (Tung *et al.*, 2014).

A pilot study was conducted to 35 nurses in public district hospitals in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. The results revealed that 77.1% of nurses with more than five years of working experience with their immediate leaders have admitted that they experienced least support to be more committed in their job. Results also indicate that leaders' interpersonal

communication skill was associated with perceived trustworthiness that stimulates nurses' innovative behaviour with  $r$  values in the range of .333 to .464, denoting good convergent validity.

As highlighted by Jablin and Krone (1994), building trust is considered a pivotal activity in managerial and must be led by good interpersonal communication practices. In return, nurses will be satisfied with the leaders and be motivated to cooperate very well, thereby having an effect in their behaviour to behave innovatively. Thus, the pilot study supports the importance of individual and organisational characteristics of which, communication skills is fundamental as it plays an important role that unites all the activities that exist in the whole department (Darma Tasiyah *et al.*, 2016).

Consistently, the ability of a leader to be more concerned with the subordinates' problems by providing advice and counselling, by showing the importance of communication in reducing the employees' burden, problem and provide a space for employees to express their opinion and ideas relating to their work and commitment (Mohamad Said & Zul Hamri, 2012). Additionally, Siti Asiah (2011) and Xerri and Stuard (2017) have proved in their study that communication from the leaders play an important role in stating clearer visions and missions of the organisation. The skills possessed by leaders in demonstrating leadership and good communication tend to foster positive behaviours in others (Xerri & Stuard, 2017).

Jablin and Krone (1994) identified that one of the communications in leadership that potentially affects the nurse's behaviour to be energetic and innovative in their work is the interpersonal communication skills. The lack of interpersonal communication skills by the leaders have caused the subordinates to deal with conflict within the workplace. Compared to general communication, interpersonal communication is critical in building good relationship between two parties (Jablin & Krone, 1994; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Leaders can make improvements in building good relationships and gaining trust from subordinates by providing constructive feedback to their subordinates (Mayer *et al.*, 1995).

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a correlational study since it is intended to examine the extent of the relationship between the two constructs: interpersonal communication skills and innovative behaviour. Data were collected through the distribution of questionnaire through stratified sampling technique. The focus of the study was nurses' grade U29 from public hospitals located in northern region of Peninsular Malaysia.

The survey questionnaires were equally distributed to 246 respondents. The head nurses (matron) as the unit of observation were monitored or evaluated by her/his subordinates. Respondents were asked to rate their head nurses in terms of the five components of interpersonal communication skills.

The research instruments were adopted from various sources based on the suitability. The 40 items of interpersonal communication skills measure were adopted from Jablin and Krone (1994). Interpersonal Communication Inventory scale (ICI), consists of 40 items measuring the five components of interpersonal communication skills. Innovative behaviour measure was adopted from Janssen (2000) Model of Innovative Work Behaviour Scale (IWBS), consists of 12 items, measuring the three components of innovative behaviour. Meanwhile, the moderating variable was adopted from Mayer *et al.* (1995) model of organisation trust, consists of 17 items from the three components of perceived trustworthiness.

A pre-test with several steps of amendment was made and a pilot test was also conducted before the actual study was carried out. A multiple regression analysis, univariate and multivariate techniques and, Cronbach's alpha were applied to ensure that the items adapted are stable and consistent across time. The factor analysis and principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation were used to identify a set of underlying dimensions of the construct.

## FINDINGS

Based on the findings, the extreme values from the data analyses was less than 5%. A total of 246 questionnaires were distributed and the same number were returned. The demographic data from the public hospitals showed that all of the respondents were female nurses with grade U29 having been in service for more than two years. The results indicated that no male nurses with working experience of more than two years participated in this study.

### Reliability Test

Based on the factor analysis, 17 items of interpersonal communication skills had a high factor loading and these variables were considered as having a strong association with a factor. The analysis produced five distinctive factors explaining a total variance of 87.96%. The Cronbach's alpha recorded a higher value of .915. This indicated that the data analysis had internal consistency and thus, acceptable to be used to produce a reliable scale.

The coefficient values of three variables exceeded .60. All scales reported high coefficient values, with alpha value for interpersonal communication skills ranging from .775 to .967. The dimension of coping with feelings and differences scored a very high inter-item correlation ( $\alpha = .967$ ) whereas, awareness of self and self-disclosure scored lower inter-item correlation ( $\alpha = .775$ ). Hence, all of the 40-item scales scored high internal consistency and were reliable for measuring leaders' interpersonal communication skills. The Cronbach's alpha for innovative behaviour ranged from .818 to .904 with idea realisation recorded higher inter-item correlation ( $\alpha = .904$ ), followed by idea promotion and idea generation were recorded as having  $\alpha = .898$  and  $\alpha = .818$ , respectively. The Cronbach's alpha for perceived trustworthiness ranged from .880 to .987 with integrity recording very high inter-item correlation ( $\alpha = .987$ ). All of the variables scales had high internal consistency. Thus, the overall items from the three variables were accepted as reliable. This is somewhat consistent with the result of the pilot study, which obtained alpha values ranging from .720 to .996 (Darma Tasiyah *et al.*, 2016).

**Table 1: Summary of the Scale Reliability (n = 69)**

Components	Items	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Overall Interpersonal Communication Skills</b>	40	.911*
Awareness of self and self-disclosure	8	.775
Self-expression and clarity	6	.946
Awareness of others	10	.907
Acceptance of feedback and evaluation	5	.958
Coping with feelings and differences	11	.967
<b>Overall Innovative behaviour</b>	12	.873*
Idea generation	4	.818
Idea promotion	4	.898
Idea realisation	4	.904
<b>Overall Perceived Trustworthiness</b>	17	.931*
Ability	6	.927
Benevolence	5	.880
Integrity	6	.987

### Mean and Standard Deviations

As shown in Table 2, the mean scores and standard deviations of the level of implementation of the five components of interpersonal communication skills by head nurses ranged from 3.00 to 3.67. The highest mean value was for coping with feelings and differences variable (M = 3.67, SD = .91) and the lowest mean value was for awareness of others (M = 3.00, SD = .60). This is quite consistent with the result of the pilot study which obtained alpha values ranging from .720 to .996 (Darma Tasiyah *et al.*, 2016). The result also shows that integrity scored the highest mean score (M = 3.63, SD = .92). Additionally, innovative behaviour variables, the idea realisation scored the highest mean values (M = 3.72, SD = .73). Similarly, Darma Tasiyah *et al.* (2016) concluded that leaders implementing moderately the interpersonal communication skills on workers could stimulates and inspires subordinates to achieve beyond expectation to create innovative work behaviour.



**Table 2: Level of Agreement (Means and Standard Deviations)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Interpersonal Communication Skills Variables</b>		
Awareness of self and self-disclosure (ASSD)	3.43	.66
Self-expression and clarity (SEAC)	3.60	.93
Awareness of others (AOFOT)	3.00	.60
Acceptance of feedback and evaluation (AOFAE)	3.65	.90
Coping with feelings and differences (CWFAD)	3.67	.91
<b>Moderating Variables</b>		
Ability	3.61	.98
Benevolence	3.58	1.02
Integrity	3.63	.92
<b>Dependent Variables</b>		
Idea generation	3.67	.81
Idea promotion	3.32	.91
Idea realisation	3.72	.73

The results presented in Table 3 suggest that the correlation between the five components of interpersonal communication skills and innovative behaviour were significant ( $p < .01$ ). Innovative behaviour was significant, positive and moderate to substantially correlated with idea promotion ( $r = .214, p < .01$ ) and idea realisation ( $r = .227, p < .01$ ). However, the correlation between interpersonal communication skills and idea generation is found to be less in common with the other predictors ( $r = .103, p < .01$ ), which had a relatively low average correlation. These coefficients imply that, to a moderate extent, an improvement in each of the five components of interpersonal communication skills will definitely improve the interpersonal communication skills of nurses in public hospital in northern region of Peninsular Malaysia.

Overall, all correlations specified in this study reached a significance value at  $p < .01$ , two-tailed. Therefore, this generally suggests that all of the predictors of independent variables, dependent variables, and moderating variable are significantly correlated with each other indicating significant

and positive correlation. All of the variables were analysed for subsequent analyses in order to see the interaction effects between the independent and moderating variables and their influence on the dependent variables.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis between the Five Components of Interpersonal Communication Skills and Innovative Behaviour**

Components of Interpersonal Communication Skills	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)
Idea generation	.103**
Idea promotion	.214**
Idea realisation	.227**

\*\* Significant at the .01; \* Significant at the .05.

### The Influence of Interpersonal Communication Skills on Innovative Behaviour

Table 4 summarises the results of multiple regression analyses between interpersonal communication skills and employees’ innovative behaviour. The three regression models (idea generation, idea promotion and idea realisation) show significance F change ( $F(5, 239) = 33.434, p = .000$ ;  $F(5, 239) = 55.316, p = .000$ ;  $F(5, 239) = 60.726, p = .000$ , respectively), indicating that the inclusion of independent variables generates a significant model.

From the analysis, the findings also revealed the awareness of self and self-disclosure significantly influenced nurses’ idea generation – obtaining the necessary skills to progress through the organisation ( $\beta = .194, p < .01$ ). The results also indicate that the main predictor of idea promotion is acceptance of feedback and evaluation ( $\beta = .502; p < .01$ ). Meanwhile, acceptance of feedback and evaluation has become the main predictor and has a strong relationship with idea realisation ( $\beta = 1.113; p < .01$ ). From the output,  $R^2$  change of .366, .423 and .484 indicated that the inclusion of independent variables in the respective models explained the additional variance of 36.6%, 42.3% and 48.4% for employees’ intention of idea generation, idea promotion and idea realisation, respectively.

It is found that the acceptance of feedback and evaluation skill has become the main predictor and has the strongest relationship to all of the three dimensions of innovative behaviour. Meanwhile, awareness of

self and self-disclosure was the least factor that could influence nurses in promoting and realising their idea to be innovative. Therefore, it can be predicted that the good output from subordinates was impacted by the leaders' good implementation of interpersonal communication skills when interacting with staff.

**Table 4: Summary of the Influence of the Interpersonal Communication Skills Dimensions on the Innovative Behaviour Components**

	Idea Generation		Idea Promotion		IdeaRealisation	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Dummy 1	-.225**	-.007	-.368**	-.133*	-.270**	-.038
Dummy 2	.016	-.002	-.018	-.039	-.036	-.036
Dummy 3	.179*	.052	.174*	.125*	.158*	.019
Independent variables						
Awareness of self and self-disclosure		.194**		.026		-.014
Self-expression and clarity		.112		.272*		-.056
Awareness of others		.164**		.182**		-.094
Acceptance of feedback and evaluation		.665**		.502**		1.113**
Coping with feelings and differences		-.202		-.088		-.354*
R	.342	.695	.464	.799	.374	.790
R <sup>2</sup>	.117	.483	.216	.639	.140	.624
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.106	.465	.206	.627	.129	.611
R <sup>2</sup> change	.117	.366	.216	.423	.140	.484
F change	10.623	33.434	22.080	55.316	13.032	60.726
Significant F Change	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Durbin Watson		1.593		2.005		2.076

\*\* Significant at the .01; \* Significant at the .05.

The series of hierarchical regression analyses were performed to analyse the moderating effects of perceived trustworthiness variable before one is allowed to test for the significance of a regression weight for an interaction term. Perceived trustworthiness is hypothesised to affect the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and innovative behaviour (idea generation, idea promotion and idea realisation). Therefore, another statistical test was conducted to examine the effect of the moderating variables by employing a series of four step hierarchical regression analyses.

The multiple hierarchical regression analyses describing the

moderation effects of ability on the relationships between interpersonal communication skills and idea generation were performed. Based on the result, self-expression and clarity is significant and has inverse relationship with idea generation ( $\beta = -1.798, p < .05$ ). The  $R^2$  change of .030 indicates the inclusion of independent variables in the respective models explained additional variance of 3.0%. Results also indicated the ability of the leaders is high and the level of idea generation of nurses is also high. It also showed that the ability is a full moderator to idea generation ( $F(14,230) = 2.876, p = .015$ ) and significantly influenced nurses' idea generation ( $\beta = -1.7984, p < .05$ ). It is probably the clarity of the head nurses while building a communicative interaction with subordinates that determine their clear thoughts. It is also most probably due to the nurses' perception that both of these interpersonal communication skills dimensions and idea generation do not thoroughly affect the nurses' intention to generate ideas in the work place as long as they trust their leaders (Darma Tasyiah *et.al*, 2016).

It is found that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal communication skills and idea promotion when moderated by ability but insignificantly moderates the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and idea realisation as the significant value is more than .01 and .05. The result found that ability as a partial moderator in the relationship between awareness of others and idea promotion ( $\beta = -.886, p > .01$ ), between acceptance of feedback and evaluation and, idea promotion ( $\beta = 2.298, p < .05$ ) and between coping with feelings and differences and, idea promotion ( $\beta = 2.204, p < .05$ ). The results also explained that the main predictor of idea promotion is acceptance of feedback and evaluation ( $\beta = 2.298, p < .05$ ). This indicate that the ability of leaders to accept the criticism and admission of error, receptive, appreciative, accepting of feedback and listens to subordinates before reacting can lead in influencing the idea promotion through developing work processes and persuading others to adopt the novel ideas and to build up coalitions around them (Mayer *et al.*, 1995).

The results also indicate that benevolence partially moderated the relationship between each components of interpersonal communication skills and idea promotion except for the relationship between coping with feelings and differences and idea promotion. Benevolence is high, positive, and significantly moderates the relationship between both variables ( $\beta = 1.459, p < .05$ ). The F value also indicates that benevolence is a significant

moderator of the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and idea promotion ( $F(14,230) = 2.797, p = .018$ ) indicating that the inclusion of independent variables improved the models significantly.

It is found that benevolence act as a full moderator on the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and idea realisation ( $\beta = -.760, p < .05$ ). Benevolence is positive and significantly moderates the relationship between awareness of others and idea realisation ( $\beta = .527, p < .05$ ). The  $R^2$  of .026 indicates the inclusion of interpersonal communication skills' variables in the respective models explained additional variance of 2.6% of idea realisation when moderated by benevolence. However, idea generation is not influenced by the five components of interpersonal communication skills. It may be due to the reasons that other leadership soft skills or communication skills may affect the innovative behaviour of idea generation of nurses in this study.

In terms of the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and idea promotion, the result shows that only integrity was established to significantly moderate the relationships between self-expression and clarity and idea promotion ( $\beta = -2.114, p < .05$ ), between awareness of others and idea promotion ( $\beta = -.681, p < .05$ ), between acceptance of feedback and evaluation and idea promotion ( $\beta = -3.213, p < .05$ ) and between coping with feelings and differences and idea promotion ( $\beta = 4.160, p < .01$ ). The insignificant relationship between interpersonal communication skills and other innovative behaviour dimensions may be influenced by other factors that associated with moderating variables.

Nevertheless, it is predicted that the poor moderating effect of one of the perceived trustworthiness components by no means has no effect in enhancing the nurses' innovative behaviour since there could be other factors associated with perceived trustworthiness variables can influence the relationship between both independent and dependent variables but cannot explain in this study due to the limitation occurred.

In relation to the moderating effect of ability, the output showed that only self-expression and clarity is not the salient predictor to idea generation. Meanwhile, awareness of self and self-disclosure and, self-expression and clarity are the salient predictors to the idea promotion while the five dimensions of interpersonal communication skills are the salient predictors to idea realisation. The moderating effect of benevolence result

reveals all of five dimensions of interpersonal communication skills are the salient predictors to idea generation. However, the coping with feeling and differences and awareness of others are not the salient predictors to idea promotion and idea realisation, respectively.

The result of the moderating effect of integrity has turned the five interpersonal communication skills dimensions to be the salient predictors to idea generation. On the other hand, awareness of self and self-disclosure is the only salient predictor to idea promotion. Meanwhile, three of the interpersonal communication skills dimensions; awareness of self and self-disclosure, self-expression and clarity and awareness of others are the salient predictors to idea realisation. Overall, the moderators posited are qualified; however, based on the certain limitation of the study, the findings failed to produce significant results.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study have proven the significant relationship between interpersonal communication skills and innovative behaviour through the engagement of certain components from both variables. However, the key issue focused in this study then is how well the head nurses in public state hospitals in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia in putting into practice their interpersonal communication skills to influence their subordinates' intentional behaviour to innovate in their daily work activities. In fact, some of the interpersonal communication skills dimensions showed a strong and significant relationship with innovative behaviour dimensions such as coping with feelings and differences, and integrity. The presence of perceived trustworthiness as a moderating variable is predicted to stimulate the nurses' intentional behaviour to be innovative when they perceive that their leaders have to practise good communication skills to enhance their behavioural of innovation (Knol & Van Linge, 2009). Trust is the basic component of the effectiveness of the social process and it can also be an effective predictor of subordinates' positive attitude and behaviour. Failure to understand and confide with subordinates' reaction would create a negative perception among them that would hinder their intentional behaviour to be creative and innovative (Abdul Kadir, 2011; Jablin & Krone, 1994).

In conclusion, to foster innovative behaviour within organisations, and creating a positive aura in the workplace, head nurses who implement active interpersonal communication skills need to form relationships and alliances based on mutual trust with nurses. Both parties need to cooperate, and the head nurses need to increase the level of implementing interpersonal communication skills to enhance the innovative behaviour of nurses. Only then, innovative behaviour can be stimulated among them. Accordingly, having staff who are creative and innovative can assist the Ministry of Health in mitigating the cost of healthcare and ensuring the quality of healthcare can be delivered through the appropriate healthcare delivery system. It is hoped that this study has provided a foundation and paved the way for future studies that focus on the topics discussed in this study.

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## A Review on Food Waste Disposal Approach

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*Received: 9 December 2020*

*Accepted: 11 March 2021*

*Online first: 29 March 2021*

### ABSTRACT

*A review was undertaken to explore the food waste disposal approach from the year 2014 until 2019. Four databases were used to search for articles related to food waste. 324 articles were reviewed prior to selecting 60 papers for final review. The results showed that apart from the economic loss caused by food waste, its environmental and social impacts also cause preventable damage and public debate. Further analyses showed that there were few approaches to food waste disposal. These food waste disposal trends can be categorised into three categories: 1) donation, 2) price reduction 3) food waste recycling programme. These approaches to food waste management have been introduced effectively in the countries studied. Furthermore, the food waste disposal approach could guide the supermarket and other related organisations to follow. However, the limitation of this study utilised four journal databases accessible to the researchers with specific keywords related to this research. Overall, future studies may use other journal databases and keywords for their findings. Future studies also could utilise the quantitative approach with a survey or qualitative method with an interview to gain more insight into this issue.*

**Keywords:** *food waste, food waste disposal, food safety, retailer, supermarket, literature review*



## INTRODUCTION

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, an estimated 1.3 billion tons of food are wasted each year globally, one-third of all food produced for human consumption. Each year manufacturers, distributors, and customers waste about 45% of all fruits and vegetables, 35% of fish and poultry, 30% of cereals and 20% of meat and dairy products. Due to this, food wastage's carbon footprint is estimated at 3.3 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of GHG released into the atmosphere per year (Food and Agricultural Organisation United Nation (FAO), 2019). Additionally, the direct economic effect of food waste (excluding fish and seafood) is estimated at \$750 billion per annum. Growing food requires water, seed, human resources, machinery, electricity, and fertiliser. Therefore, letting food go to waste is a wasteful use of natural resources, pushing up costs, inflating food prices and weakening the food supply chain.

Food waste is one of the biggest problems in the food industry, not only its effects on the customers but the big retailers such as Giant, Tesco and others. Food waste refers to any food and inedible parts of food or the decrease in the quantity or quality of food that were removed from the food supply chain to be recovered or disposed of (Corrado & Sala, 2018). This activity includes composting, crops ploughed in/not harvested, anaerobic digestion, bioenergy production, co-generation, incineration, sewage disposal, landfill or discarded to the sea. In other terms, food waste is defined as the organic waste discharged from various sources, including food processing plants, and domestic/commercial kitchens, cafeterias and restaurants (Chen, Jiang, Yang, Yang, & Man, 2017).

Food waste can occur in the entire supply chain activities: agricultural production, postharvest handling and trade, processing, food service industry, retailers, and households (Blanke, 2015). Previous studies have found different perspectives on food waste. For instance, a portion of agricultural products is discarded because they cannot be used for human consumption. However, it can still be safely used as animal food (Kim, Rundle-Thiele, & Knox, 2019) or to produce marketable foodstuffs (Peira, Bollani, Giachino, & Bonadonna, 2018). Besides manufacturer, there are also studies conducted on consumer behavior towards food waste (e.g., Aschemann-Witzel, Giménez, & Ares, 2018b). Within their household

and in-store decisions, consumers play a key role in food waste and their actual or anticipated food expectations. This also includes their behaviors in food buying, which influence stakeholder decision-making throughout the entire supply chain.

There are growing environmental, social and economic concerns regarding food waste. Thus, it is acknowledged as an urgent issue among governments, businesses, NGOs, academics, and the general public (Schanes, Dobernig, & Gözet, 2018). Given the high amounts of food waste occurring on the household level, many studies and prevention of food waste have been focused on the supply chain's final stages (e.g., Parfitt, Barthel, & Macnaughton, 2010). It should also be noted that there were several studies done to investigate the food waste strategies that were implemented by the supermarkets and retailers. It is found that the store food waste happened due to the customers' demand, and stores declining to put on the shelves other than perfectly edible food.

Given the complex nature of food waste issues, several researchers reviewed the literature of food waste studies. For example, Schanes, Dobernig and Gözet (2018) systematically reviewed the food waste literature focusing on household food waste practices and their policy implications. Aschemann-Witzel, de Hooge, Amani, Bech-Larsen and Oostindjer (2015) concentrated on the cause of food waste and possible action to reduce the food waste. This study has been done comprehensively with a combination of literature and expert interviews, thus provided a clear picture of food waste in the industry. Kim, Rundle-Thiele, and Knox (2019) covered the best practices in a food waste reduction programme. While the current paper only providing three examples of systematic literature review, it is acknowledged that many researchers have done a literature review, critical review and systematic review about food waste. Each of them focused on different issues to highlight. However, a review covering the approaches or methods of food waste disposal, particularly occurring on the retailer or supermarket level, remains lacking.

This paper explores the food waste disposal trends in the last five years (2014-2019). It presents a literature review of the existing scholarly discussion on the supermarket's food waste disposal approaches. The authors review and analyse evidence on how supermarket disposes of food waste

and, based on this analysis, discuss the practical aspects of implementing the strategies and the insights into policy approaches and business opportunities to address the issues raised by such evidence and recommendations for future research.

The contributions provided by this systematic review are twofold. Foremost, it serves to identify gaps in scholarly evidence that still require to be filled, thus growing the knowledge-base on food waste disposal schemes. Secondly, it offers guidelines for evidence-based management and policy-making, which can potentially enhance the quality and effectiveness of policy measures and technological innovations aimed at minimising food waste.

## **METHOD**

A review was carried out, employing systematic analysis to achieve the objectives stated in the research. This approach has been chosen to minimise the potential for errors and allow generalisability. Following the instructions of Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), the review process includes five steps: (i) research objectives ; (ii) databases selection; (iii) identification of keywords; (iv) selection of relevant articles and (v) collection of data.

Based on the (i) objectives, the research was designed to explore the food waste trends in the last five years. As to (ii) database selection, the authors have chosen to look at the Scopus, Emerald Insight, Taylor and Francis and Science Direct databases. The (iii) keywords were identified in two stages: At first, the words which are ‘food waste disposal trends’ was searched for the titles, keywords or abstracts that should be present; eventually, intending to justify the reliability of the search; the researchers created a new search on the Science Direct database through the Boolean operation (a: ‘supermarket’ OR ‘reduction’ OR ‘trends’; AND b: ‘zero waste’), searching in ‘all fields’. The document type used for the search was ‘article’, and 2014 until 2019 is the time limit for this research.

Once all the articles covering the most selected papers in the first search were included in this database, the choice for an exclusive search on the Science Direct' database is justified. The very first search resulted

in 309 articles (70 from the Science Direc database, 124 from the Scopus database, 30 from the 30 Emerald Insight database, and 100 from the Taylor and Francis database).

Upon excluding the multiple copies in both searches, (iv) selection of article process continued with analysing the abstracts of the remaining articles. More than one researcher carried out this selection process separately, concentrating on selected articles that had research questions and findings directly linked to only the objectives of this research. The collection of publications was narrowed down to 60 papers at the end of this stage, which addressed the objective.

Eventually, (v) the data extraction was obtained. To achieve the research objective, the researcher carried out a critical review of the collection of publications. Throughout the past five years, the analysis concentrated on the trends in food waste disposal. Finally, the findings of the articles under review were summarised by a systematic method. This systematic approach relies in major part on the researchers' subjective opinion of the articles examined. As mentioned by Tranfield *et al.* (2003), the researchers should be granted this certain level of subjective flexibility to evaluate and interpret different research to derive similar definitions and abstracts.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings were divided into three categories of food waste disposal trends in the five years (2014-2019). These include donations, price reduction and the food waste recycling programme.

### **Donation**

Food donation occurs in several stages of the supply chain. The first stage applies at the production level with crops that are no longer suitable to be harvested, the second stage is on the manufacturing part to the overprice product and the last stage: the distribution and market stage where food has been left out unsold at the store. Some foods are approaching the expiration date, but retailers cannot sell them because of the regulation (Calvo-Porrall, Medín, & Losada-López, 2017). On the retailer level, the most common food

waste trend is the redistribution of non-marketable food items. The retailer will donate the non-marketable food items to the farmer, retailer employees and charity organisations such as food banks and social supermarkets. It can be seen most of the retailers are ready to collaborate with farmers regularly for donation, such as animal feed or composition (recycling). However, somehow, or rather, most retailers still preferred to donate food for those who could not afford to buy it.

A food donation programme allows the retailer to collaborate with charitable organisations to donate and redistribute food that cannot be sold anymore. Food donation can also be defined as giving away food voluntarily to the society that needed it, which otherwise will throw away or waste it (Calvo-Porrall *et al.*, 2017). Donations are economical compared to the disposal, so the economic benefits add another inspiration for the retailer to contribute. This donation depends on the regulatory framework in the country where food redistribution may be duty deductible. This results in reasons for food donations, including reputation advantages, tax savings, and avoidance of disposal costs (Miroso, Mainvil, Horne, & Mangan-Walker, 2016). For example, in France, retail stores measuring 400 square meters and above are mandatory to offer extra food to educational or charitable institutions. However, regulations in the UK hamper redistribution because retailers are afraid of lawsuits (Hermsdorf, Rombach, & Bitsch, 2017).

Another similar programme is called a food bank. Redistribution of food via food banks and charities was described as a morally and environmentally friendly solution for food waste matter and food deprivation. A food bank is described as a nonprofit organisation that coordinates the pickup and distribution to charities of food products from commercial stakeholders. The food bank's goal is to provide excess food from agriculture, industry, and restaurants to redistribute it to social welfare organisations. Over-order or manufacturers that overproduce food products will be taken care of by the food banks, which will collect that extra food on a large scale from the retailer (Facchini, Iacovidou, Gronow, & Voulvoulis, 2018). The food bank will then handle fresh surplus produce with a remarkably rapid reception and redistribution system. The Global Food Banking Network has established the standard where several organisations for food bank such as The Food Central (Norway), The Food Bank (Denmark) and Last Minute Market (LMM) (Italy) are operating in compliance with these principles (Bech-



larsen & Ascheman-witzel, 2018). Other than Norway, Denmark and Italy, the practice of food bank can be seen from the Feeding America where it has a national food brand of more than 200 food bank that coordinates the distribution of edible food and grocery products in the United States (Calvo-Porrall *et al.*, 2017).

The food bank has an obvious purpose where they are targeting to eliminate food waste and the campaign against food insecurity. Relatively, though, they are all related to both the goals of development before hunger. Also, food banks have been recorded to have moved from an appearance that was once solely hunger and deprivation to one that involves conservation but is often dominated by it. However, another reason found behind this was the promotional techniques which were an essential part of this growth (Bech-larsen & Ascheman-witzel, 2018).

Generally, obstacles identified by donations are an administrative burden, economic burden (donation costs must not surpass disposal costs), shortage of donor storage space to reduce food losses if food banks/food charities do not instantly receive it, lack of (cooled) acceptor-side transport (capacity) and poor coordination attributed to food banks/food charity mostly collaborating with volunteer groups (Garrone, Melacini, & Perego, 2014). Commonly for the food manufacturing sector, most donated goods surpass domestic/commercial sales by date. For example, the food manufacturing firm will deliver a perishable product to a manufacturer so that the retailer can sell it to the customer. This has been the key reason for the production of excess food in places such as Italy as well. A significant obstacle stated by the expert of the Belgian Association of the Food Industry is the fact that relatively non-finished products could not be donated because they were not wrapped or labelled and very often risk ending up in feed processing or waste disposal agencies (De Boeck, Jacxsens, Goubert, & Uyttendaele, 2017). The donation can be financially burdened for the food manufacturing firm before packaging and branding these semi-finished products. When packaging and labelling were to be carried out by food banks or charities, this may also cause concern because the product labels required extra legal obligations to be followed. Insufficient voluntary awareness of the legal side of label details may cause food safety issues. The latter could be resolved by a standardized food bank tag licensed to be used by the qualified national food safety regulator (De Boeck *et al.*, 2017).

For the retailer charity process, it could be assumed that each retailer has its own approach. The common practice to donate goods ranges from pre-packed food donations that is already four days prior use-by date to late afternoon donation after 16 hours of the use-by date. This practice will have significant consequences for the acceptors such as food banks or local charities as it indicates when they need to distribute the goods to the most disadvantaged. The latter, which is a best before date donation, requiring immediate redistribution that is not always possible. This is because volunteers operate in charities that are less flexible in affordability and mode of transportation to collect the almost spoiled food products from the given retailer. National food banks primarily received food goods from the retailer's central warehouse, while local food charities typically received donations from local stores.

Nevertheless, the latter must meet other standards to obtain the goods, although they differ depending on the manufacturer or local shop involved. For instance, goods purchased have to be delivered free of charge, and perhaps most large retailers contribute only to food banks-related charities. The local shop's distance to the charity must also be minimal for some suppliers that can be under a certain number of kilometers. Stores do not always donate stable shelf items, as there are no losses due to efficient inventory control. The same refers to goods that are frozen. Deli-based salads are the majority of donated products, fresh fruits and vegetables and composite ready-to-eat goods such as cooked meat products. Fresh meat and fish donations are very minimal because they are highly vulnerable to microbiological degradation and require strict monitoring of the cold chain to avoid possible outgrowth of foodborne pathogens (De Boeck *et al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, the charity organisations' lack of cooled or frozen storage capacity and logistics is identified as obstacles (Bech-larsen & Ascheman-witzel, 2018). The volunteers concerned have re-emerged a lack of stability, coordination and lack of information on food safety. If the products are not well stored (refrigerated) and delivered, several retailers listed the potential damage to their brand name. The concern for the growth of parallel loops where products are sold at a reduced price and the challenge of identifying a charity organisation with adequate resources and a reliable team of people to establish a long-lasting relationship has also been considered inefficiencies. Depending on the region, the latter challenge differs as some areas, houses

are more charities than others. Donating items involve the retailer's extra effort as they are constantly in contact with any charity and keep track of which charity organisation comes to receive which one of the donated goods (De Boeck *et al.*, 2017).

## **Price Reduction**

One of the food waste trends in the last five years is where the retailer prefers to reduce the price for substandard or low-quality food products which is why they can offer a wide range of food product. This strategy is usually for a product which its characteristic might be impaired, but it does not imply a lack of nutritional quality. Therefore, the retailer could offer the consumer with a considerably lower price of the product, which is suitable for its lower quality than the standard offer. A food product that is almost expired usually will be introduced with a discount since a consumer will prefer to buy the low food price, and this is seen as a good move by the retailer. The excess food will be sold immediately compared to the food that are thrown out (Halloran, Clement, Kornum, Bucatariu, & Magid, 2014). Similarly, minor visual flaws also can be offered at a reduced price even though it does not affect the product quality (Lebersorger & Schneider, 2014).

In order from retailers to tackle food waste problem, they need to consider a serious outlook on the price strategy since it plays a large and potentially beneficial role in reducing food waste in the store itself. Most of the retailer use price strategy, which is a widespread application for food waste avoidance. This practice is suitable for the products that are almost expired, which is called expiration date-based pricing or also for products that have slight damage or, in terms of appearance, in which they start to look unappealing. Food is one of the best examples for this practice as food are easy to be expired, abnormal, imperfect, which can be called 'suboptimal food'. Suboptimal food can be defined as food which is still edible to eat but had been differentiated from the usual food in term of their appearance or that which almost reach the expiration date. There are several advantages of price reduction in suboptimal food. The food waste in the store will automatically be reduced and therefore will improve employee satisfaction as they no longer need to handle the food waste and no additional sources needed to transport food waste to another location. Food waste can be avoided from

the start of the process. The price reduction strategy has also been viewed as beneficial in term of the food waste hierarchy (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2019; Filimonau & Gherbin, 2017).

However, there is a particular risk of implementing the retailer's price reduction strategy as it requires additional resources. Therefore, the store image might be impacted by implementing a pricing strategy and the characteristic of the product sold. Retailers need to be concerned about the value of this kind of food on display to be sold, and the pricing strategy used as customers might have a negative perception of the quality and brand image. Thus, to address such issues and also to investigate on which practice to be implemented that provide price-reduced suboptimal food for tackling wastage quite effectively, more in-depth information is required. It is a fact that most of the food thrown away at the retail stage or process are still in good condition in terms of appearance, but because the food has passed the expiration date, the food is no longer to be sold. For instance, it can be seen in Austria, where it has higher than one-quarter of the food wasted (Lebersorger & Schneider, 2014). The food that is still in a good condition is why the retailer has taken initiatives to sell the food that almost reaches best before date or suboptimal food in appearance, but at a lower price (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2015). This practice has also been widely used in Denmark (Aschemann-Witzel, de Hooge, & Normann, 2016; De Hooge, Oostindjer, Aschemann-Witzel, Normann, Loose, & Almlil, 2017).

The price reduction strategy has been proved to be successful as it generates excellent sales, which contributes to minor wastage amounts (Lebersorger & Schneider, 2014). This action seems to not break any rules in terms of morally 'right' to consumers at first sight and is economically stable. Furthermore, the retailer also gets profit from selling suboptimal food or food which almost reach the expiration date that otherwise is being thrown away, which generates loss to the store. Nonetheless, it is not as simple from the supermarket's perspective, and accurate data on either the actual value of recycling wastage is still lacking (Brancoli, Rousta, & Bolton, 2017).

For the first one, it is not always the seller that pays the price of unpurchased goods based on the legal agreements for the particular item in question. Next, there is a risk when suboptimal food that were displayed on the shelf with a price reduction as the consumer might have a negative view

toward the standard price of the product and the remaining product range offer at the store. This is because a particular product which has a lower price and suboptimal product in term of appearance have been regarded as an indicator of the store quality (Bech-larsen & Ascheman-witzel, 2018). Additionally, consumer during their shopping will learn more about the price. Therefore, the image of the store and price knowledge have been impacted as the consumers may know about the price. The business of the store then might have a negative view by the consumer, especially on the price of reduced items. Third, there is additional work for the employees. The employees need to identify the products, add an expected price label and ensure the suboptimal is separated from the shelf when the food is no longer suitable to be sold or has reach the expiration date. This process is to ensure other products sold at the store is of high quality. Finally, the selling of valuation-reduced goods could end up in reducing the more beneficial revenues of goods with a standard price (Aschemann-Witzel, Jensen, Jensen, & Kulikovskaja, 2017a).

## **Food Waste Recycling Programme**

Based on previous studies by Aschemann-Witzel *et al.* (2015), the food waste can be decreased with strategic collaboration among institutions; synergistic activities between governments, societal stakeholders, and retailers; appropriate communication to consumers; and consumer education (best-before-date, expectations and perceptions, and consumer household food management behaviour). Additionally, educating the curriculum on food waste in school can help the reduction of food waste by giving awareness about food waste from an early age and implementing in educational programmes in EU school (i.e., UK, France, and the Netherlands) (Hermsdorf *et al.*, 2017; Russell, Young, Unsworth, & Robinson, 2017).

Furthermore, the programme made by nonprofit organisation to collaborate with various companies in providing information about food waste and other incentives that are relative on low cost and quick implementation (Priefer, Jörissen, & Bräutigam, 2016). There are also a lot of campaign that are driven by Non-Organisation Profit such as 'Love Food Hate Waste' in Great Britain launched in 2007, that led to a 21% reduction of household FW (2007-2012), 'Stop Wasting Food' in Denmark,

'Too Good for the Bin' in Germany, 'Quijette un oeuf, jette un boeuf' in France, 'Of a meal do not even waste a tiny bit' in Catalonia, and 'Zero Waste Movement' in Portugal (Priefer *et al.*, 2016). The aim of all these programmes and campaign is to give information about food waste that is currently a problem and to give the awareness of how this food waste have impacted the environment (Calvo-Porrall *et al.*, 2017).

The two ways to minimise food waste are monetary and non-monetary strategies. In non-monetary strategies, businesses collaborate with non-profit organisations on a donation basis, without exchanging money for surplus food. In the case of food-sharing or food bank operations, the participating non-profit organisations, e.g. food banks or food-sharing operations, distribute donated items to either individuals in need or group leaders as well those that are interested (Hermsdorf *et al.*, 2017; Johnson *et al.*, 2019). Meanwhile, in monetary strategies, the redistribution of the surplus takes place by identifying and developing (secondary) markets, usually in business models. Another monetary strategy is selling of defective items (e.g., damaged packaging, a few days to best-by date) through standard retail at a reduced price (Teller, Holweg, Reiner, & Kotzab, 2018). For example, like Food Rescue where food items that are discarded as food waste at one stage of the supply chain are then used in a product or as part of a service and sold for profit. The aims of the Food Rescue include giving awareness on food waste and the side effects it have on the environment and social behaviours in society.

According to Hahn, Spieth, and Ince (2018), it is possible to assess whether an organisation should be deemed sustainability-oriented based on the motivation of the entrepreneur. Sustainability-oriented businesses aim to contribute to the enhancement of human well-being and the overall condition of the social and environmental factors (Jolink & Niesten, 2015). Yet the company's survival cannot be achieved without economic prosperity (Breuer, Fichter, Lüdeke-Freund, & Tiemann, 2018). The goal of making the food supply chain more sustainable is pursued through a business model (Shashi, Singh, Centobelli, & Cerchione, 2018). The core idea is to develop a business model specifically for food rescue, combining efforts to reduce waste and save food while generating profit (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2017b).

## CONCLUSION

The increasing amount of food lost or wasted globally impacts food security and has attracted the attention of researchers, governments, and international organisations. While extensive research has been carried out regarding food waste management, this paper explored the small segment of it, particularly the food waste disposal approach from 2014 to 2019. Thus, only one important topic was discussed in this paper: the approach that has been implemented by supermarket management in reducing their food waste. If consumers and retailers could avoid food waste from occurring along with every phase of the food chain, including at the supermarket and household levels, reducing food waste is achievable (Schanes, Dobernig, & Gözet, 2018). This paper explained three approaches in dealing with food waste that supermarkets have implemented.

First, food donation through charity or food bank organisation should be considered. Many researchers have proved that this approach could reduce food waste from retailers and supermarkets (Rombach *et al.*, 2018). Not only does it reduce waste in the supermarket, but this approach also boosts the company image. When the supermarket or retailer donates surplus food to the people in need, the society will look up to the retailer as an example of a good organisation (Devin & Richards, 2018). Price reduction strategies could also be advantageous, although it has some risks for the organisation before implementing them. This is because the retailer will reduce the price of inferior or low-quality food products, particularly suboptimal food. This practice has been proved to be successful as it generates great sales and is connected to minor wastage amounts (Lebersorger & Schneider, 2014). The third approach is the food waste recycling programme. This programme usually synergies several organisations together in implementing the project and is another excellent choice, especially to build up an organisation image in a country. The programme is made with the collaboration of non-government organisation (NGO) and various companies that give information about food waste and other incentives relative to low cost and quick implementation (Priefer *et al.*, 2016). This programme supports the country's food waste policy (Vilariño *et al.*, 2017).

Although this is only a conceptual paper, some practical implications could be suggested to be implemented. Firstly, the food waste campaign may

increase awareness among consumers and supermarket managers about the methods that could be used to reduce food waste. The supermarket can boost profitability and create goodwill in the process (Vilariño *et al.*, 2017). It is also possible to achieve increased profitability through incurring additional tax write-offs (reducing taxable income) or by the revenues by additional tax write-offs (reducing taxable income). The tax deduction is only possible if the country's food waste policy includes it as an incentive for the company or organisation (DeLorenzo, Parizeau, & von Massow, 2019).

Supermarket food waste is a very narrow area of study, but the extension would be beneficial because it could minimise both costs and effects on the environment. However, the limitation of this study should be noted. First, this study only utilised four journal databases accessible to the researchers with specific keywords related to this research. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies may use other journal databases and keywords related to food waste. It is important to examine other approaches or methods aimed at reducing food waste. This includes a more experimental studies to identify food waste intervention and to assess the actions in real situations. Future studies could also utilise the quantitative approach with a survey or qualitative approach with the interview or to gain more insight into this issue. The mixed-method approach could support and justify the food waste disposal issues greatly.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article is a partial report for the undergraduate final year research project of first and second authors.

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