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## Financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students

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### ***Abstract***

The study aimed to determine the relationship between financial behavior, in terms of spending habits, among senior high school students and the influence of financial behavior on students' spending decisions. The researchers utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The data were collected from 198 randomly selected senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose using both printed and researcher-made questions on a 5-point Likert scale. Weighted mean was used to determine the level of financial behavior and spending habits, and to determine if there is a significant relationship between the financial behavior and spending habits. Pearson's  $r$  was used to ascertain the relationship between financial behavior and spending habits. The data treatment and interpretation revealed a significant relationship between financial behavior and spending habits. Furthermore, it has also been found that financial behavior is the most significant variable that affects the spending habits of an individual, as it highly influences the spending decision. The findings also highlight the importance of understanding the different factors that influence their attitude towards money, peer influence, and the ability to manage money effectively. To sum up, the findings show that students, parents, and educators pay attention to the factors that influence financial behavior, helping students become more responsible and make informed decisions regarding allowances and purchases. It is therefore recommended that schools, parents, and educators strengthen financial literacy education and guidance to help students develop responsible financial behavior and make informed, wise spending decisions.

**Keywords:** financial behavior, spending habits, decision-making, spending decision, financial literacy

## Financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students

### 1. Introduction

With the current shift in economic practices, understanding finances and managing one's money are important skills, particularly for senior high school students learning to budget. Moreover, students are an important part of the journey of personal development, as they begin to build habits that will influence their attitudes towards finances throughout their lives. Divine Word College of San Jose is among the schools in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, where students and youth can hang out and spend their money whenever they want. Duska (2022) finds that people also exhibit poor financial behavior by spending more on wants rather than allocating their money across categories. As a result, it affects students' academic performance, stress, and financial difficulties, leading most students to work, take on debt, or overspend at a young age. On the other hand, students with higher financial literacy tend to make better decisions about spending and saving, often due to parental guidance. Students who understand the value of money, budgeting, and saving decisions can avoid falling into debt and overspending. According to Alcalde et al. (2022), good financial behavior is vital for students, as poor financial management can lead to severe consequences, especially since they must make various financial choices and may soon encounter financial hardships. Therefore, good financial behavior among senior high school students is essential, as it supports money management in life and helps them manage their finances effectively. Moreover, Khoirunnisaa and Johan (2020) found that financial knowledge and financial attitude knowledge were at a moderate level. High-grade school students tend to have better financial knowledge and attitudes than those from low-grade schools.

Furthermore, financial behavior, which consists of saving and spending, was categorized as poor. Senior high students spend a lot on necessities and other expenses. With that, students need to control and prevent spending on unimportant things and choose their priorities. As supported by Labong et al. (2024), the cost of living continues to rise. As time goes by, everything becomes digitally accessible, which directly shows how this new generation faces unique challenges. As we look into the deeper level, we can see how financial behavior highly influence gen z, and with that, we can understand that people can improve financial outcomes and have healthier spending and saving habits that would enable gen z to prioritize having a clear goal, planning, and avoiding terrible spending habits by providing enough knowledge about how to handle money properly as well as having a positive behavior that will lead to a better saving result—in line with Rodriguez et al. (2024), having a financial management plan for the senior high students that equips them with practicing financial skills that focus on budgeting, savings, and social media awareness that prepares them for financial independence. Several factors influence students' spending habits, including their environment, friends, and social media. At home, students often learn from their parents' budgeting and spending priorities. If they observe their parents buying anything they want without planning or prioritizing, they may adopt a similar attitude, spending more on wants than on needs. Personal costs such as beauty products, study needs, telecommunications, clothing, and health products reflect individual needs and also indicate higher expenditure among students.

Moreover, Lalmuanpuia (2021) argues that students' budgeting and financial expense management significantly influence their behaviors, making them more dynamic and distinct from one another. As students become more knowledgeable about their financial responsibilities and status, they tend to reduce their expenditures. Budgeting and purchasing are two key aspects that work in parallel, becoming simpler and more efficient as financial literacy improves. To develop effective financial resource management, students must build confidence, apply real-world skills, and demonstrate functional money-handling behaviors. This includes making sound financial decisions, recognizing opportunities to earn, caring for their belongings, and adapting effectively to various life events.

This study seeks to determine the financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Since these students are starting to access financial resources through allowances,

part-time work, or other means, it is important to understand how they manage their finances and the factors that guide their spending decisions. The aim of this study is to determine the student's financial behavior and determine their spending habits, along with their understanding and practical use of financial concepts like budgeting, saving, and the prioritization of needs and wants.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the effect of financial behavior on the spending habits of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of financial behavior of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose in terms of spending decisions and saving habits? (2) What is the level of spending habits of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose in terms of personal needs and personal wants? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose?

**Significance of the Study** - This research aims to provide crucial information and knowledge regarding the chosen topic to help identify what they spend on and improve their spending behavior. Students will directly benefit from this study, as it will reflect current behavior in handling their own money. It will enable students to take control of their financial lives, prioritize their spending habits, avoid unnecessary debt, and be more responsible in their financial habits, including saving and budgeting. Additionally, Parents and Guardians can benefit from reduced expenses by guiding their children to manage money properly, especially by sorting needs from wants and understanding the importance of responsible, wise spending. They help provide better guidance and support for healthy practices at home. Moreover, Teachers can identify the financial issues affecting senior high school students' academic performance. They provide support and guidance to help students be aware of their spending decisions. Through teachers, students can reach out to school administrators to determine what to remove and improve in school fees. The results of this study could be used as feedback or assessment for school administrators to promote healthy financial behavior and spending habits among students, assess the effectiveness of current financial literacy programs, and identify areas for improvement. The study findings can help the school to evaluate results that also contribute to the school's reputation and credibility in promoting financial literacy and responsibility among the students of Divine Word College of San Jose, particularly senior high school students. Also, the Local Government can allocate resources more effectively to support education and help youth become financially responsible, contributing to the community's economic stability and growth. With this, they can also provide financial support to senior high school students enrolled in the K to 12 Program. This study will allow future researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose, enabling them to contribute to their field and identify gaps. This study can also contribute to the existing body of research on financial behavior and spending habits, which provides valuable data for future studies.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This research focused on determining the relationship between financial behavior and spending habits among senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, financial behavior was measured using their spending decisions and saving habits, while spending habits were measured using their personal wants and demands. The study was limited to Grades 11 and 12 students in Divine Word College of San Jose. This study was conducted from July 2025 to February 2026.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. This design focuses on determining existing conditions and the relationships among two or more variables without manipulating them, allowing researchers to identify patterns and measure the degree of association between them, as discussed in Creswell's quantitative research framework (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a descriptive design was used to determine the levels of financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. In contrast, a correlational research design was used to determine the significant relationship between financial behavior and spending habits among senior high school students.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of this study were the Grade 11 and 12 students of Divine Word College of San Jose, with a total of 412 participants representing three academic tracks, including Business, Accountancy, and Entrepreneurship (BAE), with a total sample size of 20; Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (ASSH), with a total sample size of 30; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), with a total sample size of 47. In addition, there are three strands from grade 12: Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), with a total sample size of 18. At the same time, Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMMS) had a total sample size of 27, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) had a total sample size of 56. Respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, which was deemed appropriate because it could provide relevant data to describe the variables under investigation and determine possible relationships between them. Participation was anonymous, encouraging honest and unbiased responses. This method ensured a diverse and representative sample, providing valuable insights into the students' financial behavior and spending habits of the senior high students. For a population of 404, the computed sample size was 198 using the Raosoft Calculator with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level.

**Research Instrument** - This study used two sets of instruments: adapted questionnaires and a researcher-made questionnaire. To determine the level of financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose, adapted questionnaires from Abawag et al. (2019) were used. However, the researcher-made questionnaire was used to measure students' spending decisions and personal wants. The survey questionnaire consists of 4 parts with 28 items. Wherein the respondents were selected based on their preferred level, using the following 5-point Likert scale: 5-Always, 4-Often, 3-Sometimes, 2-Seldom, and 1-Never. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the researchers used an expert validation. The three experts came from the senior high school department. They checked whether the questions were aligned, ensured that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, and determined their spending habits, including how much they spent. The comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final set of instruments, ensuring that each item was refined for accuracy and relevance, thereby strengthening validity. To ensure the instrument's reliability, the researchers used the split-half method. The reliability testing was conducted with 30 respondents, following the study by Abawag et al. (2019).

**Table 1**  
*Reliability Results of the Adapted Questionnaires*

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
1. Financial Behavior			
Saving Habits	7	0.80	Good
2. Spending Habits			
Personal Needs	7	0.70	Acceptable

\*Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items

Based on the Cronbach's alpha results, the instrument was valid and reliable and ready for administration to the final set of respondents.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers first prepared a request letter addressed to the senior high school academic coordinator of Divine Word College of San Jose, asking permission to survey all senior high school students, signed by the research adviser. It was permitted; therefore, the researchers personally distributed the adapted and research-made questionnaires to all senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose from December 11-12, 2025, to December 15-17, 2025. Therefore, the data-gathering procedure lasted 5 days. This process was designed to ensure there were no biases and that the study had a clear basis and relevant data.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - This study employed descriptive statistics, such as weighted mean, to determine the level of financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Moreover, to determine if there is a significant relationship between the financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students, Pearson's r moment correlation coefficient was used. It is a statistical measure that assesses the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables.

**Ethical Considerations** - For ethical considerations, before the study was conducted, the researchers sent a consent form. They informed the senior high school academic coordinator of Divine Word College of San Jose that the participation of senior high students is needed in this study. The letter of consent provides brief information regarding the researchers' study. Proceeding to ask permission to borrow for a short time from the advisers of each section. Moreover, respondents' personal information, such as their names, is not required to be included in the survey questionnaires. Therefore, the respondents' answers shall be kept confidential to protect them. Only the researchers can see the answers in the survey questionnaires. Lastly, the researchers used and followed the APA 7th edition citation style.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of Financial Behavior in terms of Spending Decisions and Saving Habits*

Indicators (Spending Decisions)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I think carefully before making a purchase.	4.11	High Level
2. I consider the worthiness and quality of the product before buying it.	4.40	Very High Level
3. I plan how to spend my allowance in advance.	3.92	High Level
4. I ask for advice from family or friends before buying expensive things.	3.53	High Level
5. I avoid borrowing money just to buy something I really want.	4.02	High Level
6. I think about how buying something will affect my savings.	4.17	High Level
7. I look for cheaper alternative products when I am shopping.	3.86	High Level
Composite Mean	4.00	High Level
Indicators (Saving Habits)		
1. I am able to allocate my budget to match my spending.	3.95	High Level
2. I see to it that I will always have weekly or monthly savings.	3.85	High Level
3. I am able to determine what should be prioritized before and during buying an item.	4.07	High Level
4. I list down my budget planning every day or every week.	3.11	Moderate Level
5. I use my personal money (savings) for my wants and needs.	4.04	High Level
6. I avoid spending and limit myself from spending too much money.	3.76	High Level
7. I keep down receipts and bills to be conscious of my spending.	2.99	Moderate Level
Composite Mean	3.68	High Level
OVERALL MEAN	3.84	High Level

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very Likely, 2.51 – 3.25 Likely, 1.76 – 2.50 Unlikely, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Unlikely

Table 2 shows the mean level of financial behavior in terms of spending decisions and saving habits, with an overall mean of 3.84, interpreted as High Level. Regarding the spending decisions, the composite mean of 4.00 indicates a high level of financial behavior. This result suggests that they are generally learning to adopt responsible spending practices, such as prioritizing needs over wants and making thoughtful decisions. The high composite mean supports the idea that students are becoming financially aware and capable of making smart financial choices, which is essential for developing financial skills as early as senior high school, preparing for long-term responsibilities, and avoiding future financial stress. This finding is consistent with the view of Hung Kee et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of wise spending and understanding the proper allocation of money towards the needs and wants.

The highest mean score is 4.40, corresponding to the statement “I consider the worthiness and quality of the product before buying it,” which is interpreted as very high, suggesting that students strongly evaluate product quality before making purchases. The findings indicate that senior high school students consistently and strongly assess the quality and value of the product or service before making a purchase. The behavior shows a high degree of financial awareness and spending practices among students. The study by Rifani et al. (2024) suggests that students become impulsive buyers; however, the findings show they do not engage in impulsive buying; instead, they exercise careful judgment when choosing products or services. However, the lowest mean score is 3.53, corresponding to “I ask advice from family or friends before buying expensive things,” which is interpreted as a high level, indicating that although students practice independent decision-making, consultation with others is

slightly less common than with other spending behaviors. In connection with this, the findings show that students would like to have independence in making their own decisions, leading them to make personal spending decisions while also consulting others. It includes income, allowances, and financial assistance that influence how students manage their spending and saving. As mentioned by Rosal et al. (2025), the financial support from parents and family plays an important role in senior high school students' everyday expenses and financial decision-making.

In addition, the composite mean of 3.68 indicates a high level of financial behavior, particularly in saving habits. With this, the high composite mean observed in this study indicates that students can effectively manage various challenges related to handling finances and expenses. It reflects a commendable level of financial discipline as early as being a senior high school student. This was also comparable to the study by Fenta et al. (2017), which emphasized that saving is essential but often difficult because it requires individuals to limit current consumption in favor of future benefits. Moreover, the highest mean score is 4.07, corresponding to the statement "I am able to determine what should be prioritized before and during buying an item," which is interpreted as a high level, indicating that students are capable of prioritizing their needs when managing their finances. The findings imply that the students were mature enough to differentiate between needs and wants, which is a great help, especially for the future, as they know how to manage both saving and spending properly. In line with Gonzales et al. (2024), effective saving among students depends on their ability to prioritize spending and allocate savings to different life purposes. Furthermore, the lowest mean score is 2.99, corresponding to "I keep down receipts and bills to be conscious of my spending," which is interpreted as a moderate level, indicating that expense record-keeping is the least-practiced saving behavior among the students. The present study found that the students demonstrate moderate financial behavior and that early exposure to independent living may contribute to the development of responsible money management skills. This aligns with Hartono & Isbanah (2022), who note that many students are still young and in the process of becoming adults, which means they are engaged in continuous learning.

Table 3 presents the mean levels of spending habits for personal needs and wants, with an overall mean of 3.49, interpreted as High Level. The composite mean of 3.68 indicates a high level of spending on personal needs, suggesting that students are mindful and deliberate in their spending. Also, most indicators showed high mean values, indicating that students have become more conscious of how they allocate their resources for daily consumption. As the respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness and managed their own spending, this confirms findings from a senior high school context showing that budgeting contributes to disciplined spending and improves decision-making. As shown by Styles (2018), financial management provides a structured way to allocate both income and expenses.

The highest mean score is 4.02, which corresponds to the statement "I usually eat at restaurants, carinderia, or fast-food chains," interpreted as a high level, suggesting that students frequently allocate money for food consumption outside the home. This explains why, despite having a high level of budgeting awareness, they still allocate part of their allowance to eating at food establishments, reflecting a balance between financial discipline and their daily practical needs. As emphasized by Valerio (2023), responsible financial literacy is a key factor in building a strong financial foundation, along with setting financial goals and seeking assistance when necessary. However, practical needs such as limited access to food and time constraints lead most students to eat outside. Similarly, the study shows that socialization and exposure to restaurants or food establishments outside or near schools encourage students to spend more of their money.

**Table 3**  
*Mean Level of Spending Habits in terms of Personal Needs and Personal Wants*

Indicators (Personal Needs)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I compare prices when I buy clothes, shoes, and cosmetics with other brands.	3.98	High Level
2. I prefer higher-end personal items that are more expensive than the regular ones.	3.45	High Level
3. I spend a portion of my allowance on purchasing products from online stores.	3.76	High Level

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4. I don't hesitate to spend my money when it comes to food.	3.85	High Level
5. I usually eat at restaurants, carinderias, or fast-food chains.	3.54	High Level
6. I prefer eating a meal in our house, a boarding house, or an apartment.	4.02	High Level
7. I spend a large percentage of my money on review materials such as photocopies/printed handouts.	3.15	Moderate Level
Composite Mean	3.68	High Level
Indicators (Personal Wants)		
1. I sometimes regret buying things I wanted but did not need.	3.96	High Level
2. I sometimes borrow money to buy things I want.	2.63	Moderate Level
3. I feel upset if I cannot buy something I really want.	3.29	Moderate Level
4. I often buy snacks, clothes, or gadgets because I want them.	3.47	High Level
5. I like to keep up with my friends by buying similar things they have.	2.72	Moderate Level
6. I keep track of how much money I spend on personal wants.	3.48	High Level
7. I sometimes buy things because of the influence of advertisements and social media.	3.55	High Level
Composite Mean	3.30	Moderate Level
OVERALL MEAN	3.49	High Level

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Moreover, the lowest mean score is 3.15, corresponding to "I prefer eating meals in our house, boarding house, or an apartment," interpreted as a moderate level, indicating that eating at home is comparatively less practiced among the respondents. The point is that students tend to spend more on accessible, convenient food options rather than prioritizing home-prepared meals. The students show how their decision-making influences their choice between the two; students should practice it more, since eating at home will not cost much, unlike eating outside, but choosing convenience also shows controlled spending by not spending all and keeping some extra. Assoah (2019) points out that practicing decision-making is a vital skill that influences most students' financial behavior, as those who make decisions are likely to prioritize essential needs over wants. It summarizes the respondents' preference for eating out, even if it will cost them more. Furthermore, regarding personal wants, the composite mean of 3.30 indicates a moderate level. This implies that consumers know their wants and the factors influencing their choices, which also allows businesses to offer and advertise products that match consumers' preferences. It directly shows that respondents are moderately influenced by their personal wants when making purchases. They still maintain control and make good decisions before making a purchase. In accordance with Nouraie et al. (2017), consumer behavior among students influences how they think and act when buying products or availing services, based on their wants and satisfaction, as this behavior is shaped by personal wants and influencing factors, though not entirely driven by impulse.

Then the highest mean score is 3.96, corresponding to the statement "I sometimes regret buying things I wanted but did not need," which is interpreted as a high level, indicating that students are aware of and experience regret after making unnecessary purchases. It highlights how spending on wants makes an individual happy, but over time, it may lead to regret if the purchases do not add long-term value. Wants are optional expenses, while poor decision-making in spending on extras might affect the student's satisfaction and financial awareness. The finding supports Mulka's (2025) claim, as it shows that expenses are not necessary for survival and can also make students' lives more enjoyable, such as items bought for comfort and fun. It shows that, after making themselves happy with the item, they recognize that spending on wants can lead to dissatisfaction, since it does not lead to long-term happiness. They feel they are wasting money because it is not carefully considered, since students get thrilled by one thing when they see an item they know will make them happy.

Additionally, the lowest mean score is 2.63, which corresponds to "I sometimes borrow money to buy things I want," interpreted as a moderate level, indicating that borrowing money for personal wants is not highly practiced among the respondents. Most students do not frequently borrow money just to satisfy their wants, which indicates their financial control and shows that students are also cautious about borrowing for non-essential purchases. Students directly benefit from it, as they are less likely to borrow money from others, and it clearly shows that senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose are capable of managing their spending. This suggests that while students occasionally engage in impulse buying, they are avoiding debt. In the same light,



#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings collected, the researchers have arrived at the following conclusions. The results show that most of the time, students make careful decisions by prioritizing important expenses, especially school-related needs, before spending on non-essential items. The study shows that students find it difficult to save regularly because most of their money goes toward daily necessities, leaving little to set aside. Expenses on personal needs are at the top of the list because students have to use their money for essential expenses like food, transportation, and academic requirements, which are their daily school needs. Students do buy things for their personal wants, but they are more controlled as they limit non-essential purchases and focus on main expenses. Significant relationship between financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose. The findings reveal that financial behavior significantly influences spending habits, meaning students who are more mindful in managing their money tend to spend more responsibly.

**Recommendations** - After collecting data and determining the relationship between financial behavior and spending habits among senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose, the following recommendation is made: Students may seek more frequent guidance from family members or peers before committing to high-cost purchases. This collaborative approach can refine their independent decision-making skills and ensure more suitable financial choices for expensive items. Students may utilize digital expense-tracking applications or physical ledgers to maintain a consistent record of daily expenses. Developing the habit of keeping receipts and bills can increase financial consciousness and help them identify unnecessary expenses more effectively. School administrators and student organizations may investigate ways to provide more affordable or subsidized access to academic review materials, such as photocopies and printed handouts. This can help to reduce the financial burden on students who currently find these academic requirements a significant daily expense. Students may continue to practice self-restraint and avoid borrowing money for non-essential purchases. By relying on their own savings rather than debt to satisfy their wants, students can avoid future financial stress and maintain their current level of financial control.

Regarding the relationship between financial behavior and spending habits, educational institutions may integrate comprehensive financial literacy workshops into the curriculum. Since mindful money management significantly influences responsible spending, focused training on both saving discipline and deliberate spending can foster a more balanced financial lifestyle for students. Future researchers may conduct a longitudinal study to determine if these financial behaviors and spending habits persist as students transition into higher education or independent living and may explore additional variables, such as the specific impact of social media trends and digital payment platforms on the impulse control and record-keeping habits of youth.

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## Effect of market differentiation on the business performance of cafe businesses

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### ***Abstract***

This study examined the effect of market differentiation on the business performance of café businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The independent variable, market differentiation, was analyzed through four sub-variables: product uniqueness, pricing strategy, customer service, and location. The dependent variable, business performance, was measured using three sub-variables: business sales, market influence, and customer satisfaction. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Data were collected from 305 customers and 10 staff/owners of three selected cafés—He Brews Café, Thirty’s Café, and Coffee Break Café—using researcher-made questionnaires. Weighted mean was used to determine the extent of market differentiation and the level of business performance, while the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient assessed the relationship between the variables. Findings indicated that the cafés exhibit a high level of market differentiation, with product uniqueness and customer service as the most influential factors. Business performance was generally high, with customer satisfaction and market influence showing the strongest positive effects, while business sales were moderately impacted. Correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship between market differentiation and overall business performance, demonstrating that cafés with more distinctive products, effective pricing strategies, quality service, and strategic locations tend to achieve better performance outcomes. This study highlights the critical role of market differentiation in enhancing café business performance. The results provide practical insights for café owners, employees, and future entrepreneurs, emphasizing that offering unique products, competitive pricing, exceptional service, and strategically located

establishments can improve sales, increase market influence, and foster customer loyalty. These findings serve as a valuable reference for businesses aiming to strengthen their competitive position in the local market.

**Keywords:** market differentiation, business performance, café business, product uniqueness, business sales

## Effect of market differentiation on the business performance of cafe businesses

### 1. Introduction

Cafés have evolved over the years; coffee is no longer just a simple mix of coffee and sugar. For the new generation, good coffee is now associated with being served in a quality café. Many entrepreneurs started opening businesses with a wide range of coffee and snack options. People who visit coffee shops want more than just coffee; they want to buy a unique product from that café that differentiates it from competitors. In San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Cafes were places where a lot of different faces hung out, taking meetings or going on dates. For a long time, coffee has been viewed mainly as a commodity. Recently, however, emerging trends in both consumption and production have created new opportunities to move beyond this commodity status, according to a recent study by Pristiyono et al. (2022).

According to the research, product, price, and service differentiation have a significant effect on marketing innovation. The importance of market differentiation to a business's performance is evident. Some people buy only for what is unique about a business or shop; that is why this research will focus on how market differentiation among three cafés affects business performance. All businesses face different problems in maintaining their brand uniqueness (Giantri & Jatir, 2019). According to Adeleke (2019), failure is a major issue for small businesses globally; some small business owners have limited knowledge of business administration and marketing strategies necessary to help ensure the business's success. The study suggests that business owners should know how to give customers their own branding, especially on products that will make many customers eager to have them. A recent study by Christiyantyo (2023) investigates the performance of the coffee shop business and identifies the factors that influence it. It states that the upgrades made by coffee shop business owners significantly affected the performance of their coffee shops at that time.

In this case, the study discusses the importance of introducing innovations to a business to enhance its performance. Despite extensive research on the relationship between market differentiation and the business performance of café businesses, much of the existing literature focuses on different timeframes, particularly during the pandemic. However, there is a specific gap in understanding how this study provided answers for the residents of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Market differentiation in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, plays a vital role in demonstrating distinct brand qualities in each shop. Some of the factors that affect customers' perspectives when choosing a cafe include each shop's market differentiation, such as product uniqueness, pricing strategy, customer service, and location. It just means that these market differentiations had a great impact on the business performance of each coffee shop, especially on sales, market influence, and customer satisfaction. The research served as a guide for business owners to transform their businesses in a more meaningful way to make a difference here in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Among other significant studies, Widuri & Sutanto (2019) examine the relationships among differentiation strategy, market competition, and earnings management. The study's results were intended to provide evidence that a differentiation strategy significantly impacts management decisions regarding real earnings management. This research highlights the important role that market differentiation plays in shaping business performance and strategic decision-making. This study aimed to examine the factors that influence the impact of market differentiation on the business performance of coffee shops in a rural setting, with a particular focus on the relationships among these elements. It also seeks to serve as a foundational resource in areas where understanding of business practices remains limited. Specifically, the research provided a localized perspective on businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The findings not only contribute to a deeper understanding of market differentiation but also demonstrate how it can enhance a coffee shop's ability to attract and retain customers. Ultimately, the study aims to address common concerns and questions about business growth and performance. The research focused on how market differentiation affects overall business outcomes.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the effect of market differentiation on the business

performance of cafes in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What is the extent of market differentiation of cafe businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, in terms of product uniqueness, pricing strategy, customer service, and location? (2) What is the level of business performance of cafe businesses in San Jose, Occidental, in terms of business sales, market influence, and customer satisfaction? (3) Is there a significant relationship between market differentiation and the business performance of cafe businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro?

**Significance of the Study** - This study explores the differentiation of cafes in San Jose and the strategies they use to attract customers. The study will benefit café owners by identifying which aspects of their businesses they need to improve or upgrade. It will also guide in identifying effective strategies to attract more customers, enhance their Cafe business, and increase their income. This study contributes additional knowledge about the service quality employees provide. Every employee's performance is a big help to their business to have a unique feature. Their attitude, creativity, and skills can influence customer satisfaction. Customers will learn the differences between the cafes they visit by identifying the unique features of each cafe. They will know which cafe offers better service. The owners will learn the wants and preferences of their target market. This study will serve as a guide for future business owners examining the cafe business, helping them develop their own businesses. Also, to know what good strategies they need to use for a successful cafe business in San Jose. The study is a great help to the Local government in providing support to businesses within the municipality. Through the study, they can develop a program to assist cafe owners. It will also help academic institutions or schools serve as a reference for students and teachers interested in studying business, providing more knowledge about the differentiation of each business. This study will help future researchers gain additional knowledge about the differences and similarities of businesses. It will also serve as their guide in developing their research. They will learn the strategies business owners use to earn a profit.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This research examined the relationship between market differentiation and business performance of cafe businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The study will gather data on He Brews, Thirdys, and Coffees Break Cafes in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The study was conducted from July 2025 to March 2026. Market differentiation was specifically focused on product uniqueness, pricing strategy, customer service, and location. The business performance focused on business sales, market influence, and customer satisfaction. Also, each participant received the same questionnaire for data collection. It is important to note that the findings of this study apply only to the participants involved and cannot be generalized to individuals outside the specific population. The primary data source for this research was the questionnaire made by the researchers.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive correlational design, in which both descriptive and correlational methods were used to gather the data. This design focuses on determining existing conditions and the relationships among two or more variables without manipulating them, allowing researchers to identify patterns and measure the degree of association between them, as discussed in Creswell's quantitative research framework (Creswell, 2014). Descriptive design was used to determine the extent of market differentiation and the status of business performance. Moreover, a correlational design was used to determine the significant relationship between market differentiation and cafe businesses' performance.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of the study comprised customers, staff, and owners of the cafe business in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. This study used a stratified random sampling method to select respondents who answered the study's market differentiation questionnaire. The number of participants depended on the total population across the three cafés; therefore, a sample size was chosen to minimize bias. Also, the study used a complete enumeration method to choose the respondents for the business performance questionnaire. A letter of request was sent to the three cafe businesses to use the information they share for the study. The sample size was computed using the Raosoft Calculator with a 5% margin of error or 95% confidence level; thus, out of

1460 customers, the sample size was 305. In addition, all ten (10) staff and owners of the cafe business were included.

**Research Instrument** - This study used researcher-made questionnaires to explore the relationship between market differentiation and café business performance in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Two separate questionnaires were distributed: one for customers, who assessed market differentiation among café businesses, and another for staff and owners, who evaluated business performance. The market differentiation questionnaire consisted of four sections covering the following sub-variables: product uniqueness, pricing strategy, customer service, and location. Meanwhile, the business performance questionnaire will focus on three sub-variables: business sales, market influence, and customer satisfaction. To determine the validity and reliability of the researcher-made instrument, the researchers seek assistance from experts in the field to ensure the survey is both reliable and credible. The three experts came from the senior high school faculty. The validation and reliability process focused on ensuring that the items were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives and sub-variables. The experts' comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final copy of the survey questionnaire.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - A formal letter of request, signed by the expert, was prepared and addressed to the cafe owners. The letter stated the purpose of the research, the objectives of data collection, the importance of the study, and requested permission to conduct the survey. Respondents were asked to read and sign the informed consent form before answering the survey. Only those who voluntarily agreed and signed the consent form were included in the study. The researchers in this study personally distributed the survey questionnaires to cafe owners. The data-gathering process was scheduled to take place over a period of seven (7) days.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - The data for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Weighted Mean was used to determine the extent of market differentiation in terms of product uniqueness, pricing strategy, customer service, and location, and to assess business performance in terms of sales, market performance, and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Pearson's R Moment Correlation Coefficient was utilized to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

**Ethical Considerations** - All selected respondents had their privacy protected, and their survey responses remained confidential. Before answering the survey, the researchers informed them and explained the details of the questions. If a respondent did not participate, the researchers respected their decision and moved on to the next respondent. All participants had the right to answer the survey. Furthermore, the respondents' backgrounds were respected; for example, if their religion prohibited certain practices, those were taken into consideration. The APA 7th edition style was used as the format for this study.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Mean Extent of Market Differentiation in terms of Product Uniqueness and Pricing Strategy*

Indicators (Product Uniqueness)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. The café offers products that are different from those of other cafes.	3.93	High Extent
2. The cafe's products have higher quality compared to others.	3.87	High Extent
3. The café regularly introduces new menu items.	3.77	High Extent
4. The cafe's product design is different from others.	4.03	High Extent
5. Customers know the café because of its unique products.	3.95	High Extent
Composite Mean	3.91	High Extent
Indicators (Pricing Strategy)		
1. The café's prices are competitive with those of other cafés.	4.06	High Extent
2. The café offers products at different price levels.	4.00	High Extent
3. Customers find the café's prices reasonable.	4.08	High Extent
4. The café gives discounts or promos to attract customers.	3.69	High Extent
5. Customers find the café's prices reasonable.	4.11	High Extent
Composite Mean	3.99	High Extent
OVERALL MEAN	3.95	High Extent

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Extent; 3.40 -4.19 High Extent; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Extent; 1.80-2.59 Low Extent; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Extent

Table 1 presents the mean level of market differentiation in terms of product uniqueness, with a composite mean of 3.91, indicating a high level of differentiation. Gathering extensive observations is significant for market differentiation strategies. The study suggests that customers perceive the café as highly differentiated due to the uniqueness of its products. Among the indicators, the product design and presentation, which differed from others, had the highest weighted mean (4.03). A composite mean score of 3.91, indicating a high degree of discrepancy in mean rankings, shows that cafes offer distinctive quality as a differentiation strategy in the marketplace and can deliver products that add value to consumers and strengthen their competitive position. A distinctive product offers cafes the opportunity to reduce competition and draw consumer attention to their brand. This is supported by Widuri and Sutanto (2019), who find that firms using differentiation strategies tend to perform better and have a more sustainable long-term future than those that focus on manipulating earnings or creating financially motivated earnings, as they generate unique value for consumers. The highest weighted mean (4.03) was observed for the indicator “The café’s product design or presentation is different from others.” This illustrates that customers place great importance on visual appeal and the distinctiveness of presentation, as this uniqueness contributes significantly to the perceived value of a café's offering. This is supported by previous research by Chege (2019), which states that visually distinguishable attributes, branding, and superior product visual attributes can have a significant impact on creating a sustainable competitive advantage and improving business performance. On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean (3.77) was recorded for “The café regularly introduces new menu items”. While this item still represents High Level, there is less emphasis on continuous innovation than on other attributes related to uniqueness. On the contrary, Giantari and Jatra (2019) argued that firms must consistently transform market knowledge into innovative and differentiated products to sustain performance. This difference suggests that while cafés prioritize presentation and quality, increasing product innovation could further enhance their differentiation strategy.

In addition, the mean extent of market differentiation of café businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, with respect to pricing strategy, was assessed by customers using several pricing-related indicators. The table shows a composite mean of 3.99, which falls within the High extent category according to the provided legend (3.40–4.19). This indicates that the cafés in the area generally use effective pricing strategies, as customers consider their prices to be reasonable, competitive, and suitable for different markets. This suggests that pricing is an important differentiation that allows cafés to attract their customers while remaining competitive in the local market. This finding is supported by Isah et al. (2024), who found that the use of appropriate pricing strategies, such as value-based, cost-plus, and competitive pricing, significantly influence customers’ purchasing decisions and help businesses to remain competitive. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean was recorded for the statement “Customers find the café’s prices reasonable” (Weighted Mean = 4.11), indicating that customers strongly agree that café prices provide good value for money. This may be attributed to cafés offering prices that match product quality and customer expectations, which enhances satisfaction and trust. This result is consistent with the findings of Cui et al. (2016), who noted that well-managed pricing and promotional strategies positively influence customer perceptions and sales performance.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was observed in the indicator “The café gives discounts or promos to attract customers” (Weighted Mean = 3.69). However, it falls under the High Level category. This suggests that while cafés offer promotions, they rely more on fair and competitive pricing than on frequent discounts. This aligns with Flores et al. (2025), who argued that excessive reliance on discounts may not support long-term business growth and that balanced pricing strategies are more effective for sustainability.

Table 2 shows the mean extent of market differentiation in customer service, which is relatively high at 4.11 and is measurable through various indicators. The study indicates how cafe services influence every customer who visits the cafe. The all-composite mean is verbally interpreted as indicating a high extent: that the cafe serves every customer high-quality service and products, and they are satisfied with how the service is delivered, with a warm welcome to every customer. Many businesses are using different strategies that focus on creating unique services and value to engage more customers. Similarly, Jerab and Mabrouk (2023) argue that quality service makes the cafe different from its competitors, creating unique value for customers, which is an advantage. Strongly built

companies make the business grow and profitable. Among the indicators, “the cafe staff treat customers in a friendly and respectful way” obtained the highest extent (4.13). Customer service has a big impact on the customer, meaning that when the cafe gives quality service, there is a high chance the customer will stay and continue to support the business. This study also highlights that effective customer service creates a positive environment for both customers and staff. Providing quality service is a tool for building loyal customers (Emmanuel, 2021). “Customers feel welcome when they visit the cafe” has the lowest level (4.09) and is influenced by factors like the café’s ambiance, which played a significant role in building customer satisfaction. Patino (2018) states that good customer service has a significant effect on business reputation.

**Table 2***Mean Extent of Spending Habits in terms of Customer Service and Location*

Indicators (Customer Service)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. Many customers return to the café because of the service.	4.12	High Extent
2. Customers feel welcome when they visit the café.	4.09	High Extent
3. The café serves customers quickly.	4.13	High Extent
4. The café handles customer complaints properly.	4.1	High Extent
5. The café staff treat customers in a friendly and respectful way.	4.13	High Extent
Composite Mean	4.11	High Extent
Indicators (Location)		
1. The café is easy to see or notice from the street or public areas.	4.27	Very High Extent
2. The café’s location attracts walk-in customers.	4.27	Very High Extent
3. The café is easy to reach by public or private transport.	4.33	Very High Extent
4. The café is located in a convenient place for customers.	4.19	Very High Extent
5. The café’s surrounding area gives customers a good impression.	4.29	Very High Extent
Composite Mean	4.27	Very High Extent
OVERALL MEAN	4.19	Very High Extent

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Extent; 3.40 -4.19 High Extent; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Extent; 1.80-2.59 Low Extent; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Extent

Moreover, the mean level of market differentiation by location is interpreted as very high, with an overall composite mean of 4.27 across 5 indicators. The results show that the location of café businesses significantly influences customer attraction and visits. The very high composite mean indicates that cafes are situated in strategic locations that are easy to access and notice and efficient for customers. With a good location, cafes attract walk-in customers and leave a good impression, which strengthens their market differentiation. This finding is supported by Fauzi et al. (2021), who noted that selecting a strategic business location improves accessibility, visibility, and customer flow. Among the indicators, "The cafe is easy to reach by public or private transport" recorded the highest mean score of 4.33, showing that accessibility is the most important factor in location-based differentiation. This suggests that customers prefer cafes that are easy to reach; effortless transportation leads to frequent visits and customer retention. Accessibility also allows cafes to cater to a wider customer base, including both residents and visitors. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Marquez et al. (2025), who reported that easily accessible business locations improve customer reach and market influence. However, "The cafe is located in a convenient place for customers" received the lowest mean score of 4.19, though it remains very high. This may be due to aspects such as nearby competition, parking limitations, or varying customer preferences.

**Table 3***Mean level of Business Performance in terms of Business Sales, Market Influence, and Customer Satisfaction*

Indicators (Business Sales)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. Promotions or special offers increase the café’s sales.	4.27	Very High Level
2. The café attracts enough customers to meet sales targets.	3.91	High Level
3. The café experienced an increase in sales in recent months.	4.00	High Level
4. The café’s daily or weekly sales are consistent.	4.27	Very High Level
5. The café’s product pricing helps boost sales.	4.18	High Level
Composite Mean	4.13	High Level
Indicators (Market Influence)		
1. The café is well-known within the community of San Jose.	4.27	Very High Level
2. Customers recommend the café to others.	4.09	High Level
3. The café has a good reputation compared to competitors.	4.18	High Level
4. The café can compete well with other cafés in the area.	4.09	High Level
5. Many customers choose this café over other cafés.	4.18	High Level
Composite Mean	4.16	High Level

Indicators (Customer Satisfaction)		
1. Customers give positive feedback about the café.	4.18	High Level
2. Customers are satisfied with the café's prices.	4.00	High Level
3. Customers usually return to the café after their first visit.	4.45	Very High Level
4. Customers are satisfied with the café's service.	4.18	High Level
5. Customers are generally satisfied with the café's products.	3.82	High Level
Composite Mean	4.13	High Level
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>Very High Extent</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 3 presents the mean level of business performance in terms of sales, with a composite mean of 4.13, indicating a strong result. The implications of this high level of observation are significant for determining a café's business performance. The findings suggest that business sales play an essential role in determining the café's success and sustainability. The highest weighted mean was observed for the indicators "Promotions or special offers increase the café's sales" and "The café's daily or weekly sales are consistent." This illustrates that promotional activities and sales stability are the most influential factors contributing to the café's sales performance. Effective promotions encourage customer purchase decisions and restore demand, while consistent daily or weekly sales indicate steady customer patronage and a reliable income stream. This finding supports Birón (2025), who highlighted that cafés employing promotional strategies and product-related incentives experience improved sales outcomes due to increased customer engagement and repeat purchases. On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was recorded for the indicator "The café attracts enough customers to meet sales targets." Although this indicator still falls under a High Level, the corresponding lower mean suggests potential challenges in expanding market reach or consistently achieving the desired customer volume. This may be influenced by external factors such as market competition, changing consumer behavior, or economic conditions. In support of this finding, Fairlie and Fossen (2021) noted that external disruptions, such as economic uncertainty and business environment restraints, can negatively affect customer turnout and sales performance, especially for small businesses.

Additionally, the mean level of business performance in terms of market influence reveals how people perceive the impact of café businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, on the local market. It looks at factors such as brand awareness, customer referrals, reputation relative to competitors, competitive capability, and customer preferences. With an overall mean score of 4.16, indicating a high level, it is clear that these cafés have a robust market presence. This idea is backed by Widuri and Sutanto (2019), who underline that distinctive and strategic business practices significantly help gain a competitive edge and boost business performance. Looking at individual indicators, the café's strong brand recognition and visibility in the local San Jose community stand out, with the highest mean score (4.27). This underscores the importance of maintaining a consistent presence and familiarity within the community to achieve significant market influence. Patino (2018) supports this view, stating that high visibility and customer-focused service are crucial in enhancing business reputation and fostering customer trust. However, the indicators "Customers recommend the café to others" and "The café can compete well with other cafés in the area," both scoring a mean of 4.09, signal room for improvement. Enhancing service quality and customer engagement could bolster customer advocacy and competitive positioning. This insight aligns with Ayub (2024), who highlights that enhancing customer service and the overall experience is vital to meeting customer expectations and maintaining competitiveness.

Moreover, the mean level of business performance in terms of customer satisfaction was 4.13, indicating a strong result. This indicates that customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in the performance of the café. The findings suggest that customers generally perceive the café positively regarding prices, service, products, and overall experience. This is supported by a study by Zakari and Ibrahim (2021), who concluded that customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on the performance of small businesses, particularly in achieving financial results. The highest weighted mean (4.45) was observed for the customer retention indicator. This implies that the café does a good job of providing customers with a positive experience on their first visit, which incentivizes them to return.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean (3.82) was observed in the customer satisfaction with the current products indicator. Even though this still represents a level of satisfaction higher than average, it indicates a relatively lower degree of satisfaction compared to other indicators. This is supported by the study by Priono et al. (2024), where they indicated that innovation and adaptation of the products sold in a business are critical in helping to increase the performance of the business, suggesting that creating more innovative products would be an excellent way for the café to improve both customer satisfaction and overall performance.

Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients and significance levels between market differentiation and café businesses' performance in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The data analysis reveals that market differentiation has a significant relationship with business performance, particularly in terms of sales, market influence, and customer satisfaction, indicating that how cafes differentiate their marketing plays a crucial role in their business performance. In the relationship between the sub-variables of market differentiation and the sub-variable of business performance, which is the business sales, the product uniqueness had the strongest relationship with business sales ( $r = 0.485$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that cafes offering new, unique, and innovative products are most likely to have higher business sales. On the other hand, location had the weakest relationship with business sales; this indicates that even if a café has a strong strategic location, that alone may not drive business sales to increase. The findings relate to the theory of the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) by Rosser Reeves, which emphasizes that businesses that have distinctive features that offer a variety of goods or services gain a competitive advantage in the business world. Overall findings for this lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis; however, the pricing strategy and location variables lead to the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

**Table 4**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing ( $H_0$ )*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size ( $r^2$ )	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Market Differentiation → Business Performance (Business Sales)						
Market Differentiation (Product Uniqueness) → Business Performance (Business Sales)	0.485	0.235	1.968	9.647	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation (Pricing Strategy) → Business Performance (Business Sales)	-0.057	0.003	1.968	-0.994	0.321	Not Significant
Market Differentiation (Customer Service) → Business Performance (Business Sales)	-0.455	0.207	1.968	-8.887	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation (Location) → Business Performance (Business Sales)	-0.054	0.003	1.968	-0.943	0.347	Not Significant
Market Differentiation → Business Performance (Sales Performance)	-0.16439	0.027	1.968	-2.901	0.004	Significant
Market Differentiation → Business Performance (Market Influence)						
Market Differentiation (Product Uniqueness) → Business Performance (Market Influence)	-0.027	0.001	1.968	-0.472	0.637	Not Significant
Market Differentiation (Pricing Strategy) → Business Performance (Market Influence)	0.273	0.075	1.968	4.949	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation (Customer Service) → Business Performance (Market Influence)	0.025	0.001	1.968	0.443	0.658	Not Significant
Market Differentiation (Location) → Business Performance (Market Influence)	0.183	0.033	1.968	3.232	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation → Business Performance (Market Influence)	0.265	0.070	1.968	4.787	<0.001	Highly Significant

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size ( $r^2$ )	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Market Differentiation (Product Uniqueness) → Business Performance (Customer Satisfaction)	-0.147	0.022	1.968	-2.588	0.010	Significant
Market Differentiation (Pricing Strategy) → Business Performance (Customer Satisfaction)	-0.199	0.040	1.968	-3.540	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation (Customer Service) → Business Performance (Customer Satisfaction)	0.558	0.312	1.968	11.720	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation (Location) → Business Performance (Customer Satisfaction)	0.197	0.039	1.968	3.496	<0.001	Highly Significant
Market Differentiation → Business Performance (Customer Satisfaction)	0.256	0.066	1.968	4.618	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant      p-value < 0.05 Significant

In terms of market influence, pricing strategy is the most significant indicator affecting the performance of a café ( $r = 0.273$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Product uniqueness ( $r = -0.027$ ,  $p = 0.637$ ) and customer service ( $r = 0.025$ ,  $p = 0.658$ ) were found not significant. The affordability and external visibility drive market influence more than its internal characteristics and product attributes. Unique products and good customer service may affect individual customers' experience; they may not be recognized without proper, effective pricing and strategic location. This result is supported by the study of Isah et al. (2024), who looked at the effects of various pricing strategies on the marketing decisions made by bakers in Bida, Niger State, and found that they should keep using smart pricing, think about their costs and revenues, listen to customer feedback, and try out various pricing techniques in order to stay competitive. Overall findings for this lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis; however, the product uniqueness and customer service variables lead to the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Additionally, in customer satisfaction, customer service showed the highest significance ( $r = 0.558$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a strong positive relationship. This result indicates that friendly staff, good service, and strong customer service policies can greatly enhance customer satisfaction in a café. Conversely, product uniqueness showed the least significance with respect to customer satisfaction, although it remained statistically significant ( $p = 0.010$ ). It shows that while unique products contribute to satisfaction, customers still place a lot of importance on how the staff treats them with respect and how comfortable they are during their time in the café. This is supported by the study by Emmanuel et al. (2021), which explains that overall customer service is a significant tool for customer retention. A business with good customer service builds loyalty, satisfaction, and trust with consumers—overall, these findings lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The sub-variable of business performance that has the strongest relationship with market differentiation is the market influence ( $r = 0.265$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), because differentiation strategies are directly designed to shape how a business is perceived, recognized, and preferred in the market. When cafés offer distinctive value relative to competitors, customers are more likely to recognize the brand, recommend it to others, and choose it over other cafés, thereby strengthening the business's influence in the local market. These findings are supported by Widuri & Sutanto (2019), who state that café businesses can also maintain their market position by returning to their front position ahead of rivals. Overall, the findings in Table 3 confirm that market differentiation has a significant effect on café performance. It clearly provides empirical evidence of a highly significant relationship between market differentiation and café business performance in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. These results highlighted the importance of implementing market differentiation to positively affect the performance of a café.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings collected, the researchers have arrived at the following conclusions. Product uniqueness increases a café's sales by offering distinctive products that attract customers and set it apart from competitors. Pricing strategy plays a vital role in the market, as customer perception and brand recognition are enhanced when a café business offers fair, affordable prices. Customer service strongly affects customer satisfaction, indicating that friendly staff and high-quality service are important for generating positive feedback. Location contributes to business performance by improving accessibility and market visibility, although it alone may not be sufficient to drive higher sales. Business sales are influenced by marketing differentiation, specifically by offering unique products to encourage repeat customers and build customer loyalty. Market influence reflects the café's ability to gain recognition and a presence in the community, which is largely shaped by effective pricing. Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in overall business performance. Customers are more likely to return and recommend the café when they are satisfied with the café's service. There is a highly significant relationship between market differentiation and business performance among café businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, indicating that market differentiation can effectively influence café business performance.

**Recommendations** - After collecting data and analyzing the relationship between market differentiation and business performance of cafe businesses in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, the following recommendations are made: The cafes can continue to develop originality by providing unique and original drinks and food that are distinguishable from other cafés and restaurants through unique drinks, local flavors, seasonal food and/or beverages, or limited-time promotions. By creating original menu concepts, cafés can attract new customers and encourage them to return. The café can remain competitive by adopting a pricing strategy best suited to the current state of the business and the market. The staff and owner may continue to provide customers with good service that is essential to enhancing the overall customer experience, building customer loyalty, and encouraging repeat customers. Cafés continue to provide friendly service, quick response, and a personal touch in café customer service. The owner may consider a high-traffic location to ensure access and visibility for the café and maximize customer reach. The cafe may improve marketing campaigns, social media engagement, and combo deals that promote unique products, which can also lead to customer retention and repeat purchases. The cafe may improve its market influence by participating in community activities, integrating with local events, and using social media to increase exposure, build brand recognition, and develop a strong market presence. The cafe may improve its market influence by participating in community activities, integrating into local events, and using social media to increase exposure, build its brand, and develop a strong market presence. Cafes may strive to align their strategies for market differentiation with those for business performance to generate more sales, greater customer satisfaction, and increased profitability. Improving the uniqueness of product offerings is directly connected to increasing business sales and increasing customer satisfaction in cafes. Future researchers may consider examining additional variables that may impact café business performance, such as brand loyalty, marketing strategies, and online presence or operations. Future extensions of this study to include additional towns or regions in Occidental Mindoro will expand understanding of the market differentiation process and its relation to café business success.

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# Psychological and personal factors affecting the consumer behavior of employees

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## ***Abstract***

This research study investigated the influence of psychological and personal factors on the consumer behavior of employees of Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, the study examined the extent of psychological factors (motivation and product perception), the extent of personal factors (lifestyle and personality), and the level of consumer behavior. It also determined whether psychological and personal factors significantly affect consumer behavior. The research employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive-correlational design. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to employees through total enumeration sampling. The instrument utilized a four-point Likert scale to measure responses. Statistical tools used for data analysis included the weighted mean to determine the extent and level of the variables and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to test significant relationships among psychological factors, personal factors, and consumer behavior. Results revealed that psychological and personal factors were manifested to a high extent among the respondents. The level of consumer behavior was found to be very high, indicating careful, value-oriented, and well-planned purchasing decisions. Furthermore, both psychological and personal factors were significantly related to consumer behavior, suggesting that internal motivations, product perception, lifestyle, and personality play vital roles in shaping purchasing patterns. Based on the findings, it is recommended that marketers and business establishments consider psychological and personal characteristics when developing marketing strategies to address employees' needs and preferences better.

**Keywords:** psychological factors, personal factors, consumer behavior, product perception, motivation

## Psychological and personal factors affecting the consumer behavior of employees

### 1. Introduction

In the field of business, understanding consumer behavior is crucial. As time passes by, people tend to have dynamic consumption patterns. Consumer behavior, like all human behavior, is shaped and influenced by various factors. Consumer behavior encompasses the decision-making process, from choosing and purchasing goods to fulfill individual needs and preferences. This understanding includes several factors to consider, mainly the psychological and personal factors, which are the focus of this study. The core problem in this study is the unpredictability of consumer behavior despite its crucial role in marketing success. While several studies offer insights into consumer behavior, needs, and motivations, the constantly shifting nature of lifestyles, habits, and preferences makes it challenging for marketers to meet consumer needs and achieve mutual satisfaction consistently. The added complexity of individual differences further complicates the issue, requiring marketers to develop sophisticated, adaptable strategies to navigate this dynamic landscape (Šostar & Ristanović, 2023). In this case, it is essential to understand consumer behavior thoroughly. Considering how frequently people use products, consumer behavior encompasses every aspect of life. It examines the entire consumption process, from pre-purchase influences to post-purchase experiences (Vainikka, 2015). According to Ramya and Ali (2016), a purchase decision results from each of these factors. Initially, the consumer identifies which commodities they would like to consume, then selects only those that promise greater utility.

In line with this, individual characteristics significantly shape consumer behavior. Key personal factors influencing purchasing decisions include age, income level, occupation, lifestyle, and personality traits (Mukhiddinovich et al., 2019). It was also stated in their study that a consumer's internal mental state affects their purchasing decisions. Key psychological factors affecting consumer behavior include perception, motivation, learning processes, and attitudes. According to Pleša (2018), understanding consumer behavior is increasingly crucial in marketing. This knowledge underpins effective strategies, from market segmentation and product positioning to new product launches and marketing mix decisions. Understanding these factors is essential for three groups: researchers in economics and marketing, everyday consumers, and local businesses. Raising awareness can help change how retailers and consumers think, making businesses more competitive internationally. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, it is crucial to prioritize studying consumer psychology, including their needs and attitudes. This understanding will help businesses adapt to changing consumer preferences, leading to better success and growth (Lichev, 2017).

Along with these, Qazzafi (2020) emphasized that consumer purchasing behavior constantly evolves, shaped by a person's age, life stage, and relationship status. This is because people's tastes change as they grow older. Consumer behavior shifts throughout life's major transitions, such as marriage, parenthood, and children's entry into college (Qazzafi, 2020). In short, people are driven by a particular need at a particular time. Psychological and internal factors drive consumers' excitement about new products. Companies leverage this by focusing on elements such as motivation, perception, learning, and memory (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Numerous studies have explored psychological and personal factors affecting consumer behavior across various sectors, but few have included the private sector. It also seeks to give unique insights into how these factors play out in a specific workplace environment, specifically a private institution. Understanding these influences is crucial for improving services, enhancing employee satisfaction, and optimizing resource allocation (Susanto et al., 2016). Specifically, this study aimed to examine how these personal and psychological factors interact to influence employee consumer behavior at Divine Word College of San Jose. Nonetheless, this research provided insights into the decision-making process behind product selection. The goal was to get a clearer picture of their decision-making process, going beyond simple economic factors to understand the human side of their consumption decisions. This understanding can help businesses better adapt to the market and create products for this group of people in the

private sector.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the effect of psychological and personal factors on the consumer behavior of employees in Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the extent of psychological factors of employees in Divine Word College of San Jose in terms of motivation and product perception? (2) What is the extent of personal factors of employees in Divine Word College of San Jose in terms of lifestyle and personality? (3) What is the level of consumer behavior of employees in Divine Word College of San Jose? (4) Is the level of consumer behavior of employees significantly affected by psychological factors and personal factors?

**Significance of the Study** - This study aimed to determine how psychological and personal factors affect the consumer behavior of employees at Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). These factors include personal and psychological ones. The findings of this research will benefit several groups or individuals. The researchers believe that employees, such as non-teaching personnel, can become more aware of their consumption behavior. The study may help them determine their spending and limits. The school may also benefit by learning how to offer improved products that meet the needs and interests of its employees/consumers. Local business owners can use this study as a guide to modify their products or marketing plans to suit market needs better. The Local Government Unit (LGU) can use the study to support local economic development plans and to have a better understanding of the spending behavior of a specific workforce. The school administrators can also gain some insights about the needs, preferences, and behaviors of their non-teaching staff. Future researchers can use these as a reference for similar topics in consumer behavior, especially in other sectors related to educational institutions.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study aimed to determine the effect of psychological and personal factors on the consumer behavior of employees within Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). This included maintenance personnel, librarians, and some other staff who do not perform teaching duties. The research only concentrated on specific factors, the psychological and personal factors that may affect how and why they buy products. The psychological factors encompass motivation and product perception; the personal factors include lifestyle and personality. This study was done from July 2025 to March 2026. This study did not include teaching staff, students, or personnel from other educational institutions. It also did not include some influences such as marketing strategies, product availability, or pricing. Additionally, this study did not examine consumer behavior in online markets or platforms. Each participant or respondent was given the same survey questionnaire for data collection. The findings are limited to what the respondents have and are only available to the setting and time of the study at Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ).

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design. According to Bhandari (2021) and Clarete et al. (2023), this descriptive-correlational design examined and described the relationship between variables but did not focus on cause-and-effect relationships. Descriptive research was used to determine the extent of psychological factors in product perception and motivation, the extent of personal factors in lifestyle and personality, and the level of consumer behavior among employees at Divine Word College of San Jose. Furthermore, a correlational design was used to determine if the level of consumer behavior is significantly affected by psychological and personal factors.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents in this study were all 46 non-teaching personnel at Divine Word College of San Jose. Using complete enumeration, they are all included to represent a distinct group of employees in the institution whose consumer behavior may be influenced by psychological and personal factors such as motivation, product perception, lifestyle, and personality. This ensures that the data collected comprehensively represent the entire group of non-teaching personnel, preventing bias and ensuring fairness. The survey was administered to the entire respondent population, provided they voluntarily agreed to participate.

**Research Instrument** - The research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made questionnaire. The

questionnaire was divided into three (3) main parts. Part I focuses on the respondents' psychological factors. This section included statements related to motivation and product perception, which were measured using a five-point Frequency scale. Part II covers the respondents' personal factors. This section focuses on lifestyle and personality, which will also be measured using the same five-point Likert scale. Part III focuses on the level of consumer behavior of employees, such as the non-teaching personnel. This part determined their purchasing practices and decision-making patterns in relation to the psychological and personal factors. The responses were measured using the five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed to be clear, concise, and easy to answer, ensuring that the data collected accurately reflect respondents' perceptions and behaviors. Moreover, to assess the reliability of the researcher-developed questionnaire, the researchers sought assistance from field experts. The questionnaire was reviewed and evaluated by three research professors in the senior high school department of Divine Word College of San Jose to ensure that the items align with the study's objectives, are clear, and are appropriate for measuring psychological and personal factors, as well as consumer behavior. Suggestions and corrections from the validators were incorporated before the final administration of the survey.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers submitted a formal request letter to the human resource department of Divine Word College of San Jose to obtain approval to conduct the study and to identify the total population of non-teaching personnel. Once approval was granted, the researchers coordinated with the department to identify the designated workplaces of non-teaching personnel on campus. In accordance with ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from all potential participants, clearly outlining the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to participate voluntarily or withdraw at any time without consequences. After securing consent, the researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents to ensure accurate distribution and to address any clarifications or concerns that arose during the process. The researchers allocated sufficient time, about one day, for the participants to complete the questionnaires comfortably and without pressure, and two to three days of data collection. Upon completion, the questionnaires were collected directly by the researchers to ensure data integrity and avoid misplacement. All data collected were systematically organized and prepared for analysis, with strict confidentiality maintained throughout the process.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - The data from this study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine how the information gathered aligns with the study's objectives. Weighted Mean was used to determine the extent of psychological factors (motivation and product perception), personal factors (lifestyle and personality), and the level of consumer behavior among the respondents, based on their answers to the survey questionnaire. Furthermore, Pearson's R Moment Correlation was used to determine whether the level of consumer behavior is significantly affected by psychological and personal factors.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researchers first secured formal permission from the Human Resources Department before proceeding with the study. In identifying and selecting the respondents, the researchers sought their authorization and consent prior to administering the survey questionnaire. Each participant was provided with an informed consent form that clearly explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights as respondents. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no individual was pressured to take part in the research process. Furthermore, the researchers strictly upheld confidentiality by ensuring that all information and responses provided would be treated with the highest level of privacy and used solely for academic purposes. To protect the participants' identities, no personal details were disclosed in the final report or any related documentation. Additionally, all written outputs and references followed the guidelines set by the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the mean extent of psychological factors in motivation and product perception, with an overall mean of 4.04, interpreted as High Extent. Regarding the mean extent of psychological factors in motivation among the employees of Divine Word College of San Jose, the composite mean of 3.97, interpreted as a High Extent, indicates that motivation plays a significant role in influencing the respondents' consumer behavior. This implies

that employees' consumption behavior is largely driven by their internal needs and personal goals rather than by external pressure or impulse. This result is supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as discussed by Meshram (2023), which explains that individuals are motivated to satisfy basic and security needs before pursuing higher-level needs such as self-esteem and self-fulfillment. In the context of this study, the high level of motivation suggests that respondents engage in consumption behavior that prioritizes essential goods and personal well-being. Similarly, Bandhu et al. (2024) emphasized that motivation serves as a primary psychological driver of consumer behavior, especially when purchases are associated with personal satisfaction, responsibility, and goal attainment. In addition, Kumar et al. (2022) stated that motivated consumers are more likely to engage in deliberate and rational purchasing behavior by evaluating product relevance and perceived benefits. This explains why respondents in the study demonstrate careful decision-making rather than impulsive buying. Motivation, therefore, influences not only what consumers buy but also how they evaluate their choices before making a purchase.

**Table 1**

*Mean Extent of Psychological Factors in terms of Motivation and Product Perception*

Indicators (Motivation)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I usually purchase products based on my basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter).	4.52	Very High Extent
2. I buy products to make myself feel rewarded after finishing a task.	3.91	High Extent
3. I purchase items because they make me feel accepted or connected with others.	3.61	High Extent
4. I am motivated to buy products that I think can boost my self-esteem.	3.70	High Extent
5. I consider self-improvement and personal growth when making purchasing decisions.	4.09	High Extent
Composite Mean	3.97	High Extent
Indicators (Product Perception)		
1. My past experiences with a product influence my current purchase decisions.	4.15	High Extent
2. Advertisements and promotions affect how I view the quality of a product.	4.09	High Extent
3. I often compare different products before making a purchase.	4.30	Very High Extent
4. I am easily influenced by the brand image of a product.	3.61	High Extent
5. I buy products based on how I interpret their value, not just their price.	4.33	Very High Extent
Composite Mean	4.10	High Extent
OVERALL MEAN	4.04	High Extent

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High; 3.40 -4.19 High; 2.60-3.39 Moderate; 1.80-2.59 Low; 1.00-1.79 Very Low

The highest weighted mean was seen in the indicator "I usually purchase products based on my basic needs," with a mean of 4.52, indicating that respondents strongly prioritize necessities over wants. This finding aligns with Sharma's (2021) study, which indicates that consumers with a fixed income tend to be more conscious of their budgets and prioritize necessities. This suggests that employees are practical consumers who prioritize meeting essential needs. On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was recorded for the statement "I purchase items because they make me feel accepted or connected with others," with a mean of 3.61, suggesting that social motivation has a weaker influence on respondents' consumption behavior. This result is consistent with Lichev (2017), who noted that social influence is less significant among consumers who value practicality, responsibility, and financial stability over social standards or trends. Overall, the findings indicate that employee motivation is largely shaped by necessity and personal fulfillment, reinforcing its strong influence on consumer behavior.

Furthermore, in terms of product perception, it obtained a composite mean of 4.10, which is interpreted as a High Extent. This result indicates that respondents' perceptions of product quality, value, and usefulness significantly shape their consumer behavior. It suggests that employees tend to evaluate products carefully before making purchasing decisions, relying on their own judgment and experience rather than external influences alone. This finding is supported by Khaniwale (2015), who explained that consumer behavior is primarily influenced by how individuals perceive products rather than by the products' objective attributes. Similarly, Kumar et al. (2022) emphasized that perceived quality and prior experience strongly influence purchase intention, as consumers are

more likely to choose products they believe will provide satisfaction and reliability. Furthermore, Tulcanaza-Prieto et al. (2023) found that positive product perception increases consumer trust, which in turn enhances willingness to purchase. These studies collectively support the result that product perception is a critical psychological factor influencing consumer behavior.

The highest weighted mean was recorded in the statement “I buy products based on how I interpret their value, not just their price,” with a mean of 4.33. This implies that respondents prioritize the value of money over low price alone, suggesting that they have a practical approach to purchasing. Similarly, this finding aligns with Wang et al. (2023), who stated that consumers rely heavily on value assessment and product comparison when making purchasing decisions, especially when financial resources are limited. This behavior reflects careful consideration of the benefits, durability, and overall value of the products respondents tend to purchase.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was observed for the statement “I am easily influenced by the brand image of a product,” with a mean of 3.61, implying that branding has a relatively weaker influence on respondents’ purchasing behavior. This suggests that employees are less likely to be swayed by brand popularity or image and are more focused on personal evaluation and functional benefits. This finding is consistent with Hexian (2023), who noted that modern consumers increasingly rely on their own assessments of product quality rather than on brand reputation alone. All in all, the results indicate that product perception significantly influences consumer behavior, with respondents preferring practical, value-oriented purchasing decisions.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Extent of Personal Factors in terms of Lifestyle and Personality*

Indicators (Lifestyle)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. My daily routines influence the kind of products I buy.	3.93	High Extent
2. I prefer products that match my hobbies, interests, and values.	4.00	High Extent
3. I often buy convenient products that save me time and effort.	4.28	Very High Extent
4. I choose products that reflect my way of living.	4.17	High Extent
5. My social activities influence the products I consume.	3.85	High Extent
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>High Extent</b>
Indicators (Personality)		
1. My personality influences the brands or products I prefer	3.78	High Extent
2. I am consistent in the type of products I buy because of my personal traits.	3.91	High Extent
3. I prefer products that match my individuality and uniqueness.	3.91	High Extent
4. I avoid products that do not align with my personal values.	3.98	High Extent
5. I tend to remain loyal to brands that fit my personality.	4.00	High Extent
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>High Extent</b>
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High; 3.40 -4.19 High; 2.60-3.39 Moderate; 1.80-2.59 Low; 1.00-1.79 Very Low

Table 2 shows the mean extent of personal factors in terms of lifestyle and personality, with an overall mean of 3.99, interpreted as High Extent. It also shows the mean extent of spending on personal needs and wants, with an overall mean of 3.49, interpreted as High Level. Lifestyle, as a personal factor, explains how respondents' daily routines, interests, and activities affect the products they buy. With a composite mean of 4.05 (High Level), the result indicates that lifestyle strongly influences respondents' buying behavior. This means that their way of life and daily activities affect their purchasing decisions. These findings were supported by Kumar et al. (2022), who reported that consumers typically purchase products that align with their daily habits and lifestyles. Clootrack (2025) explained that lifestyle was shaped by personal preferences, work, and social identity, which influence what consumers value and buy. This shows that lifestyle plays an important role in shaping consumer choices.

The highest weighted mean was found for the statement ‘I often buy convenient products that save me time and effort’, with a mean of 4.28, indicating that respondents prefer products that are easy to use and not time-consuming. This may be because employees have busy schedules, leading them to choose convenient products, as supported by Lichev (2017), who found that people with regular routines prefer practical, convenient products. In contrast, the lowest weighted mean was found in the statement ‘My social activities influence the products I consume’ with a mean of 3.85, which shows that social activities have less influence on their buying behavior.

This result was also supported by Dhanush (2024), who found that buying behavior was more influenced by habits and routines than by social interaction. In addition, Victor and Viswanadham (2022) stated that lifestyle and personal responsibilities influence buying decisions more than social factors do. Overall, the results show that lifestyle significantly affects employees' consumer behavior, particularly through convenience and daily routines.

Furthermore, personality obtained an average score of 3.92, categorized as high; the results indicate that personality significantly affects respondents' buying decisions. They tend to favor products and brands that reflect their personal traits and values. These findings are supported by Shemshaki et al. (2024), who state that personality involves consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, including how people engage with products and brands. When a brand matches a consumer's personality and values, it becomes easier for that consumer to feel satisfied and loyal. Moreover, Nordin et al. (2024) state that personality is a major factor affecting consumer behavior, which relates to the study, as employees can purchase a product brand based on their personality.

Additionally, Lau et al. (2024) found that extraversion, agreeableness, and conspicuousness significantly influence impulsive buying decisions, indicating that personality traits shape how employees engage with their product brands. The highest weighted mean was recorded in the statement “I tend to remain loyal to brands that fit my personality” with the mean of “4.00.” This indicates that they repeatedly stick with their product brand, which reflects their characteristics, values, or self-image. Similarly, these findings align with Kolańska-Stronka, M., & Singh, B. (2023), which indicates that they remain loyal to their preferred product brand as a result of their loyalty to the product.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was recorded in the statement “My personality influences the brands or products I prefer” with the mean of “3.78,” which indicates that most of the employees are not influenced according to the brands or products that they prefer, as if they base their preferences on the prices or brands. This study is consistent with Huang and Yu (2024), who stated that personality alone does not fully determine consumer behavior. Thus, the results indicate that personality significantly influences the respondents' consumer behavior toward their preferred product or brand.

**Table 4**  
*Mean Level of Consumer Behavior*

Indicators (Consumer Behavior)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I carefully consider my needs and wants before making a purchase.	4.17	High Level
2. I tend to buy products that provide the best quality for my money.	4.41	Very High Level
3. I often rely on recommendations from others before deciding to purchase.	3.93	High Level
4. I am likely to repeat purchases if I am satisfied with a product.	4.37	Very High Level
5. I choose products that provide good value for their cost.	4.46	Very High Level
6. I avoid buying products that do not meet my quality expectations.	4.41	Very High Level
7. I plan my purchases ahead of time rather than buying impulsively.	4.09	High Level
8. I check information such as product reviews before deciding to buy.	4.26	Very High Level
9. I adjust my purchasing behavior based on my monthly budget.	4.35	Very High Level
10. My consumer choices are influenced by both psychological and personal factors.	4.30	Very High Level
Composite Mean	4.28	Very High Level

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 4 discloses the level of consumer behavior of employees of Divine Word College of San Jose, with a composite mean of 4.28, interpreted as a Very High Level. This result indicates that the respondents demonstrate careful, well-planned consuming behavior. The very high level suggests that employees are conscious buyers who consider value, necessity, and practicality when making purchasing decisions, rather than engaging in impulsive or unplanned consumption. This finding is supported by Williams (2025), who emphasized that consumer behavior among working individuals is largely influenced by rational decision-making, financial awareness, and budget



pursuing higher-level needs. In line with this, Meshram (2023) emphasized that motivation drives need-based and goal-oriented purchasing behavior, particularly among individuals with fixed incomes, such as employees.

For product perception, the relationship with consumer behavior shows a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.714$ ), an effect size of 0.510, a computed t-value of 6.761, and a p-value  $< 0.001$ , indicating a highly significant effect. This indicates that product perception has a substantial influence on consumer behavior. The large effect size suggests that more than half of the variance in consumer behavior is explained by respondents' perceptions of product value, quality, and usefulness. This finding is consistent with Khaniwale (2015), who stated that consumer behavior is largely influenced by product perception rather than objective product attributes. Similarly, Kumar et al. (2022) emphasized that perceived quality and value are strong predictors of purchase intention and actual consumption behavior.

When psychological factors are considered as a whole, the correlation between psychological factors and consumer behavior is  $r = 0.648$ , with an effect size of 0.420, a computed t-value of 5.640, and a p-value  $< 0.001$ , indicating a highly significant, strong positive relationship. This implies that motivation and product perception collectively play an important role in shaping how employees consume products. This result aligns with Kotler and Keller (2016), who explained that psychological factors are central determinants of consumer decision-making processes.

In terms of lifestyle, the correlation coefficient between lifestyle and consumer behavior is  $r = 0.736$ , with an effect size of 0.542, a computed t-value of 7.209, and a p-value  $< 0.001$ , indicating a highly significant relationship. This indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that respondents' daily routines, time constraints, and activities strongly influence their purchasing behavior. The large effect size implies that lifestyle accounts for a substantial portion of variation in consumer behavior. This finding supports Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019), who stated that lifestyle reflects how consumers allocate time and money, thereby shaping their consumption patterns. Likewise, Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasized that lifestyle is a key personal factor influencing product choice and buying decisions.

Regarding personality, the relationship between personality and consumer behavior yielded a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.771, an effect size of 0.594, a computed t-value of 8.019, and a p-value  $< 0.001$ , indicating a highly significant relationship. This strong positive relationship indicates that personality traits significantly influence respondents' brand preference, loyalty, and purchasing consistency. The relatively large effect size suggests that personality explains a considerable portion of consumer behavior. This finding is consistent with Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019), who noted that personality affects decision-making styles and preference consistency. In addition, Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasized that personality influences how consumers respond to products and brands that align with their self-concept.

When personal factors are considered collectively, the correlation coefficient between personal factors and consumer behavior is  $r = 0.806$ , with an effect size of 0.650, a computed t-value of 9.039, and a p-value  $< 0.001$ , indicating a very strong and highly significant relationship. This suggests that lifestyle and personality together have a greater influence on consumer behavior than psychological factors alone. The large effect size indicates that respondents' personal characteristics can explain a substantial portion of consumer behavior. This finding supports Kotler and Keller (2016), who emphasized that personal factors are among the strongest determinants of consumer behavior, especially among working adults with established routines and responsibilities.

The findings in Table 5 confirm that both psychological factors and personal factors significantly affect the consumer behavior of employees of Divine Word College of San Jose. Among the variables, personal factors, particularly personality and lifestyle, exhibited the strongest relationships, followed closely by product perception. These results validate the study's conceptual framework and theoretical foundations discussed in Chapter 2. Anchored on Consumer Behavior Theory and Maslow's Motivation Theory, the findings demonstrate that consumer behavior is shaped by an interaction of internal psychological processes and personal characteristics, thereby supporting the study's objectives and strengthening the rejection of the null hypothesis.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the significant findings, the following conclusions were made. The findings show that employees are highly motivated to consume products. They are mostly motivated by their basic needs and personal goals when buying products. Based on the results, the respondents exhibit a high extent of product perception. Employees tend to carefully consider the value and quality of products before deciding to buy. The findings indicate that their lifestyle highly drives the respondents. Their daily routines and need for convenience influence what products they purchase. Employees' personalities have a significant impact on their consumer behavior. As shown in the findings, respondents prefer products and brands that align with their personal traits and values. The respondents exhibit a high level of consumer behavior. It shows that employees are careful, practical consumers who consider quality, value, and budget when making purchases. The results reveal that psychological factors significantly affect respondents' consumer behavior, indicating a strong influence of internal motivations and perceptions. Additionally, the findings also confirm that personal factors significantly influence consumer behavior, suggesting that individual characteristics play an important role in purchasing decisions.

**Recommendations** - In relation to the conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance understanding and support better consumer practices among the employees in Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). Businesses on or near campus may focus on offering essential, affordable products. Since product quality and value for money influence their buying decisions, sellers may ensure that the product remains reliable and long-lasting and offer reasonable prices to maintain customers' trust and loyalty. Recognizing that lifestyle also influences consumer behavior, businesses may provide convenient, practical products that fit employees' daily routines. Businesses may strengthen their brand identity and maintain a positive relationship with customers. Employees may continue to practice careful planning before making a purchase decision, especially for their own goods, to maintain their value-oriented decision-making behavior. Since psychological and personal factors significantly influence consumer behavior, businesses and institutions may consider them when developing strategies and programs that align with employees' needs and preferences. Future researchers may examine the long-term effects of psychological and personal factors on consumer behavior. This may provide deeper insights into potential changes in motivation, lifestyle, and purchasing behavior among employees, such as non-teaching personnel at Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ).

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## Financial knowledge and financial preparedness of senior high school students

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### ***Abstract***

Managing money is an essential life skill, especially for students beginning to experience financial independence. This study aimed to determine the relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness of Senior High School ABM and BAE students in Divine Word College of San Jose. The respondents included all 86 students, with 41 from BAE 11 and 45 from ABM 12. A descriptive-correlational research design was used, and data were collected using adopted questionnaires measuring financial knowledge and financial preparedness, which were validated and found to be reliable. Descriptive statistics, specifically weighted mean, and Pearson's  $r$  correlation were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the respondents demonstrated high levels of financial knowledge and financial preparedness, with composite means of 4.12 and 3.94, respectively. Furthermore, there was a strong, highly significant positive relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness, indicating that students with greater financial knowledge are better able to manage expenses, plan for the future, and handle financial challenges effectively. Based on these results, it is recommended that the school provide more classroom activities to develop responsible money habits, teachers and counselors may conduct workshops and goal-setting exercises to strengthen students' financial confidence, school organizations and administrators may implement activities related to practical money management, and future researchers may explore additional factors that influence students' financial knowledge and preparedness.

**Keywords:** financial knowledge, financial preparedness, financial literacy, financial decision-making, money management

## Financial knowledge and financial preparedness of senior high school students

### 1. Introduction

Managing money is one of the most fundamental life skills people need, especially in today's rapidly changing world (Forson, 2023). However, according to Cacnio and Romarate (2024), recent data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) indicate that only about 25% of Filipino adults are financially literate. This life skill is now particularly suitable for students who are beginning to experience financial independence and responsibility. These abilities must be instilled in them at an early stage in life so that they will grow up to be responsible and wise adults (Sulistiyowati et al., 2024). Financial knowledge refers to the capacity to effectively understand how saving, borrowing, spending, critical thinking, and planning help individuals in making responsible and well-informed decisions (Katnic et al., 2024). In many countries, including the Philippines, schools and institutions are increasingly recognizing the value of financial education, especially among youth. This is supported by national policies such as Republic Act No. 10922, which promotes the development of national consciousness on economic and financial literacy and established Economic and Financial Literacy Week in the Philippines. However, despite growing awareness, many young people still face financial struggles due to rising prices of daily necessities, emergency expenses, and the temptation to make easy digital purchases through apps like GCash and Maya (Cariaga et al., 2023). Without proper knowledge, it is easy to overspend or develop unhealthy financial habits. Many Filipinos continue to face difficulties in managing their finances effectively because they often lack the skills to budget, save, or plan.

Financial preparedness refers to a person's ability to handle unexpected expenses, emergencies, or other financial challenges with confidence and readiness. It is the ability to control living expenses to maintain the standard of living and provide support when a person is not working (Zunaedi & Shakil, 2025). It involves more than simply knowing about money; it also includes taking practical actions, such as creating a budget, exercising sound money management, and avoiding unnecessary debt. This kind of preparedness is especially important for students, who are already managing school-related expenses and may soon face larger financial responsibilities, such as college tuition or living costs. Improving financial preparedness at an early stage helps students develop habits that can protect them from poor financial outcomes in the future (Ekasasmita et al., 2024).

Senior High School students in the Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) strand and Business and Entrepreneurship (BAE) cluster are taught financial concepts as part of their curriculum. Although it is now called Business and Entrepreneurship to reflect changes in industry demands and educational priorities as part of the newly implemented MATATAG Curriculum, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023) stated that it is still generally referred to as ABM in most schools and by students, indicating a gradual transition in terminology. As future business leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals, they are expected to have higher levels of financial understanding (Balid et al., 2024).

Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ), one of the academic institutions offering the ABM strand and the Business and Entrepreneurship cluster in Occidental Mindoro, provides finance-related subjects to give students both practical and theoretical knowledge. The ABM strand in DWCSJ continues to grow, with 86 students enrolled as of School Year 2025-2026, according to the official class list of Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) students in Grades 11 and 12, as provided by the Academic Coordinator. It offers subjects to help students build a strong foundation for business-related careers, such as Business Mathematics, Organization and Management, and Fundamentals of Accountancy. However, the actual financial preparedness of these students has not been clearly measured.

The researchers aimed to analyze the relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness among Senior High School ABM students of Divine Word College of San Jose. It sought to determine whether

students with higher financial knowledge are more prepared to manage unexpected financial challenges. The findings may help improve the school's financial education program and serve as a guide for developing better money habits among students.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of financial knowledge among senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose? (2) What is the level of financial preparedness among senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose? (3) Is there a significant relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose?

**Significance of the Study** - This research is conducted to provide crucial information on students' financial knowledge and preparedness. SHS students, particularly ABM and BAE students, are the main focus of this research. The study can help them understand their level of financial knowledge and financial preparedness, which can guide them in improving their financial habits and gaining additional knowledge. Additionally, the results can support teachers, particularly those teaching business, accounting, and finance-related subjects, by serving as a guide and reference on the topic. This research can raise awareness of the importance of teaching their children financial skills and supporting them in applying them in real life. This may also provide senior high school coordinators with a guide to assess the effectiveness of the current SHS curriculum, particularly the ABM and BAE curriculum, to offer more finance-related seminars. This study can help inform administrators' evaluation of the effectiveness of current curriculum subjects related to financial knowledge and may help develop or revise programs that support students' financial readiness. The findings can contribute to DWCSJ's ongoing efforts to improve student development, particularly in life skills such as financial management. It can also serve as supporting data when planning academic improvements or collaborations with institutions specializing in financial education. Lastly, this will serve as a helpful reference for future researchers interested in exploring financial knowledge and preparedness among students.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This research focuses on the financial knowledge and financial preparedness of SHS students in Divine Word College of San Jose for the academic year 2025-2026. The study covers ABM and BAE students who are enrolled as of June 2025, when the research officially started. It aims to measure their knowledge of basic financial concepts and their readiness to manage personal finances effectively in real-life situations. The selection of respondents is limited only to 86 ABM and BAE students and does not include any other grade levels or strands. It explores only financial knowledge and financial preparedness and does not cover any other topics beyond these two variables. The findings were based solely on survey responses.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive-correlational research design is used to describe situations or characteristics clearly and to examine relationships between variables as they naturally occur, without manipulating them (Polit & Beck, 2021). A descriptive design was used to assess the levels of financial knowledge and financial preparedness among ABM students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Moreover, a correlational design was used to examine the relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness among ABM students at Divine Word College of San Jose.

**Respondents of the Study** - This study included the Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), and Business and Entrepreneurship (BAE) students of Divine Word College of San Jose. According to the official records from the academic coordinator, there are 86 ABM students currently enrolled. This study used complete enumeration because the population of SHS students, specifically the ABM and BAE Students, at Divine Word College of San Jose is relatively small. This approach ensured that all students were included as respondents, eliminating the possibility of bias in the selection process. By covering the entire population, the study produced accurate, reliable data that fully represent ABM students, making the findings more valid and applicable.

**Research Instrument** - The study used adopted questionnaires from Cardenas and Fonte (2021) to describe the financial knowledge of ABM students in Divine Word College of San Jose. Additionally, the financial preparedness of the respondents was assessed using the Financial Well-Being Scale developed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB, 2015) as cited in Zhang and Chatterjee (2023). The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part evaluates the financial knowledge through a series of statements where respondents indicate how often they practice a certain behavior on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” “Often,” to “Always.” To validate the adopted questionnaires, the researchers used expert validity; the three experts were from the Senior High School department, holding research and business subjects. They were asked to carefully review the questionnaire to identify any ambiguities, potential issues, or areas for improvement. This process helped ensure that the instrument effectively measures the intended variables and produces accurate, consistent results for the study.

**Table 1**

*Reliability Results of the Adapted Questionnaires*

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Interpretation
Financial Knowledge	6	0.74	Acceptable
Financial Preparedness	6	0.89	High Reliability

\*Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items

Based on the adopted reliability results, the instruments used in this study were originally reported to have high internal consistency.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - In this study, the researchers had first prepared a formal letter of request that was given to the Academic Coordinator of Divine Word College of San Jose to obtain permission to conduct the study and to request access to the official list and total number of Grade 11 Business and Entrepreneurship and Grade 12 ABM students enrolled during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The adopted questionnaires were then personally distributed by the researchers to the selected ABM students in Divine Word College of San Jose. The survey was distributed during their free time or after class hours to avoid interrupting academic activities, and it ran from December 15-17, 2025. The entire data-gathering process lasted 3 days to allow sufficient time for participants to complete the survey and for the researchers to collect and review the responses.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - This study employed descriptive statistics, such as the weighted mean, to describe the financial knowledge and financial preparedness of SHS students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Moreover, to determine whether there is a significant relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness among SHS students, Pearson's r moment correlation was used.

**Ethical Considerations** - In conducting this study, the researchers ensured that all ethical principles were observed throughout the entire research process. Respect for the participants was prioritized by obtaining their informed consent before participating in the survey. Each participant was fully informed of the purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and their right to refuse or withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly upheld. All responses were treated with the highest level of confidentiality, and no names or identifying information were included in any part of the research report. The study was conducted honestly to ensure that the information collected and presented is true and accurate. No data were changed or hidden to fit a certain result. Proper credit was also given to authors and sources used in this study to ensure respect for the work of others and to avoid plagiarism. Additionally, the researchers ensured transparency in data collection and handling, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes. By maintaining these ethical standards, the study aims to protect the dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants involved.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Table 2 shows the mean level of financial knowledge of the respondents. The table shows a composite mean

of 4.12, classified as High Level, indicating that the senior high school respondents, particularly ABM and BAE students, generally demonstrate good financial knowledge and responsible financial behavior. This implies that the students can make good financial decisions and manage their money wisely. It also shows that learning financial subjects in school helps students build responsible financial habits. This result supports the idea that financial knowledge helps individuals make responsible decisions and improve their financial well-being (Selvia et al., 2021). Financial knowledge is not only an understanding of financial concepts but also the ability, confidence, and motivation to apply them to manage resources effectively for long-term security (Pascual & Santos-Recto, 2024; Morris et al., 2022).

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Financial Knowledge*

Indicators (Spending Decisions)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I carefully think before buying something.	4.40	Very High Level
2. I am responsible for my money.	3.90	High Level
3. I prefer saving money for the future.	3.99	High Level
4. I enjoy planning before spending.	4.06	High Level
5. I believe money should be used wisely.	4.56	Very High Level
6. I set long-term goals and try to save or plan for them.	3.99	High Level
7. I make sure to settle my bills on time.	4.23	Very High Level
8. I always check on my accounts and manage them carefully.	4.05	High Level
9. I cover my expenses without needing to borrow money.	3.99	High Level
10. I choose products after checking the prices.	4.08	High Level
Composite Mean	4.12	High Level

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very Likely, 2.51 – 3.25 Likely, 1.76 – 2.50 Unlikely, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Unlikely

Among the indicators, the highest mean score is for the statement that respondents believe money should be used wisely, with a mean of 4.56, interpreted as a very high level, suggesting that students strongly value proper money management and responsible spending. This may be because ABM and BAE students are trained to understand the importance of budgeting, saving, and financial planning through their specialized subjects and real-life applications. On the other hand, the lowest mean score is reflected in the statement that respondents consider themselves responsible with their money, which obtained a mean of 3.90 and is interpreted as a high level. However, it still falls under a high level. This may indicate that, while students understand financial concepts, they are still developing consistency in applying responsible financial practices in their daily lives, which is common among adolescents who are still learning to manage limited allowances and navigate financial independence. This can be explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Icek Ajzen (1991), which suggests that although students may have positive attitudes toward wise money use, their actual financial behavior depends on their intentions and their ability to act on those intentions consistently. Overall, the findings imply that ABM and BAE students possess strong financial knowledge, likely influenced by both school-based financial education and other sources such as family and media, which together help shape financially responsible youth.

**Table 3**  
*Mean Level of Spending Financial Preparedness*

Indicators (Personal Needs)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am confident that I could handle a big, unexpected expense if it happens.	3.84	High Level
2. I am preparing and planning for my financial future.	3.92	High Level
3. I trust that the money I save will be enough for my future.	3.52	High Level
4. I can still enjoy life with the way I manage my money.	4.12	High Level
5. I usually have some money left over after covering my needs.	4.03	High Level
6. I stay on track in managing my allowance and expenses.	4.15	High Level
7. I feel in control of my financial situation.	3.81	High Level
8. I can give gifts on special occasions without straining my budget.	4.00	High Level
9. I believe that my financial situation allows me to work toward the things I want in life.	4.07	High Level
10. I know that I can manage my finances well.	3.95	High Level
Composite Mean	3.94	High Level

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 3 presents the mean level of financial preparedness of the respondents. The computed composite mean of 3.94, described as High Level, indicates that the senior high school respondents, particularly those in the ABM and BAE strands, are generally capable of managing their current finances and preparing for possible financial needs. This implies that the students are not only knowledgeable about financial concepts but are also able to apply them in managing their money and preparing for future financial responsibilities. It also suggests that their exposure to finance-related subjects strengthens their confidence and readiness to handle financial challenges. Financial preparedness refers to a person's readiness to face financial challenges and continue daily activities despite unexpected expenses, which involves both financial resources and confidence in managing money (Lone & Bhat, 2022).

The statement with the highest mean concerns staying on track with managing allowance and expenses, with a mean of 4.15, interpreted as a high level. This implies that many students can monitor their spending and manage their day-to-day finances, possibly due to regular budgeting practices and the application of financial concepts learned in school. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score is for the statement about trusting that their savings will be enough for the future, with a mean of 3.52, which is also interpreted as a high level. This suggests that although students try to save and manage their money, they may still feel uncertain about their long-term financial stability because they rely mainly on allowances and have limited earning opportunities. These findings can also be understood through the Consumer Socialization Theory (Ward, 1974), as cited in Anggraeni et al. (2025), which emphasizes that individuals, especially adolescents, develop financial knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors through learning experiences from family, school, peers, and media. Overall, the results show that ABM and BAE students have a solid level of financial preparedness. However, their long-term financial confidence may continue to improve as they gain more financial experience.

**Table 4**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing ( $H_0$ )*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Financial Knowledge → Financial Preparedness	0.709	0.503	1.990	9.225	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 4 summarizes the correlation between respondents' financial knowledge and financial preparedness. The results show a correlation coefficient of 0.709 and a p-value < 0.001, indicating a highly significant, strong positive relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness among ABM and BAE senior high school students. The computed effect size of 0.503 further suggests that financial knowledge has a substantial influence on students' level of preparedness. This means that students with higher financial knowledge are more likely to demonstrate greater readiness to handle financial responsibilities, plan for the future, and manage potential financial challenges. This finding is supported by Lone & Bhat (2022), who suggest that financial preparedness is closely connected to an individual's level of financial knowledge and ability to apply it in real-life situations. In addition, financial preparedness involves not only understanding financial concepts but also applying that understanding to plan, budget, and respond effectively to unexpected financial situations. Since the respondents are ABM and BAE students exposed to financial and business-related subjects, their academic background likely strengthens both their financial knowledge and preparedness. Overall, the results suggest that improving students' financial knowledge can significantly enhance their financial preparedness, underscoring the importance of continuous financial education for senior high school learners.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings collected, the researchers have drawn the following conclusions. The respondents, particularly ABM and BAE senior high school students, demonstrate a high level of financial knowledge. They are generally able to understand financial concepts, make responsible financial decisions, and apply money management skills. The respondents exhibit a high level of financial preparedness. They are capable of managing daily expenses, monitoring allowances, and applying budgeting practices, which reflects their readiness to handle

financial responsibilities and unexpected financial challenges. Exposure to finance and business-related subjects further strengthens their confidence and practical skills in financial management. There is a strong and highly significant positive relationship between financial knowledge and financial preparedness among the respondents. Students with higher financial knowledge are more likely to demonstrate greater financial readiness, plan for the future, and manage potential financial challenges effectively. This underscores the importance of developing financial knowledge to enhance financial preparedness and emphasizes the role of continuous financial education for senior high school students.

**Recommendations** - Based on the conclusions, the following recommendation was drawn: The institution may provide students, particularly ABM and BAE senior high school students, with more classroom activities and exercises that encourage responsible money management, helping them consistently apply financial knowledge in daily life. Teachers and guidance counselors may conduct additional short workshops, seminars, or simple goal-setting exercises to help students plan for long-term savings and build confidence in their financial stability, addressing areas where students feel uncertain about future financial sufficiency. School organizations and administrators may implement activities focused on money management and planning that allow students to apply their financial knowledge and improve their preparedness for current and future financial responsibilities. Future researchers may explore other factors influencing students' financial knowledge and preparedness, such as parental guidance, peer influence, part-time work, or access to digital financial tools, to investigate areas not fully examined in this study.

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## Members' loyalty, participation, and performance of Rizal Microbank

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### ***Abstract***

In today's competitive market, members' loyalty is critical for retention, as it signifies a deep commitment to the bank's long-term success. This study examined the relationship among members' loyalty, participation, and performance of Rizal Microbank. Specifically, it aimed to determine the levels of members' loyalty in terms of business ethics and roles and obligations, members' participation, and bank performance, and whether members' loyalty and participation significantly affect performance. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design using a quantitative approach. A total of 319 respondents were selected through simple random sampling from 1,683 active members. Data were collected using adapted and validated survey questionnaires and analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Findings of this study revealed that members' loyalty in terms of business ethics and roles and obligations, as well as members' participation and bank performance, were all at a very high level. Furthermore, the results showed significant relationships between members' loyalty and performance and between members' participation and performance, indicating that higher levels of loyalty and participation are associated with improved bank performance. Overall, the findings suggest that the very high levels of member loyalty and participation contribute significantly to Rizal Microbank's strong performance. It is therefore recommended that the bank continue strengthening ethical practices, enhance member engagement, and encourage active participation to sustain and further improve performance.

***Keywords:*** members' loyalty, participation, bank performance, business ethics, roles and obligations

## Members' loyalty, participation, and performance of Rizal Microbank

### 1. Introduction

In today's competitive banking landscape, developing strong member relationships is essential for long-term business growth and success. Members' loyalty and participation are critical to driving business performance, especially for microbanks serving niche markets (Brief History and Background – Rizal MicroBank, n.d.). To remain competitive in the current market environment, achieving high member loyalty is essential for retaining members, as loyalty signals a strong commitment to continue supporting the bank. Therefore, banks need to continue offering superior financial products and services to their members to ensure high member satisfaction, which can ultimately trigger loyalty (Kim et al., 2024). Members' loyalty and participation are important for banks' growth and sustainability (Riegler, 2023). Loyal members generate consistent revenue, require less marketing effort, and frequently promote the bank through word-of-mouth. Meanwhile, active participation, such as using digital services or providing feedback, enables banks to improve efficiency, tailor services, and foster innovation. Together, these factors build member relationships, increase satisfaction, and contribute to the banking industry's long-term success.

Rizal Microbank strives to be the preferred financial partner for micro and small banks in the Philippines by establishing long-term relationships based on trust, care, and exceptional service. The bank fosters members' loyalty by building meaningful connections grounded in core values such as "Malasakit" (genuine concern), integrity, and commitment. It actively encourages participation by providing easily accessible and convenient financial services, particularly in agricultural and underserved areas, ensuring that even the most remote entrepreneurs are included (Brief History and Background—Rizal MicroBank, n.d.). With a strong emphasis on member-centered, innovative products, Rizal Microbank listens to and responds to its members' real needs, helping them pursue their dreams and improve their livelihoods. This strong commitment to loyalty and engagement reflects the bank's mission to make financial services truly inclusive, playing an important role in empowering communities and supporting economic growth nationwide. This study aimed to determine the levels of members' loyalty, participation, and performance of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Furthermore, it sought to determine the relationship between these variables.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the effect of members' loyalty and participation on the performance of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. More specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of members' loyalty in Rizal Microbank in terms of business ethics and roles and obligations? (2) What is the level of members' participation in Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro? (3) What is the level of performance of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro? (4) Is the level of performance of Rizal Microbank significantly affected by members' loyalty and participation?

**Significance of the Study** - The study will be beneficial to the bank's members as the bank improves, becomes more efficient and accessible, and provides customer-friendly services. This can lead to increased member satisfaction, better financial inclusion, and stronger trust between the bank and its members. The findings of this study can also help Rizal Microbank identify areas for improvement in its banking operations and customer service. Through this study, the bank may enhance its performance and better align its strategies with its members' needs. In addition, this study will greatly benefit the employees of Rizal Microbank by helping them understand how members' loyalty and participation affect the bank's performance. When employees know what makes members loyal and more likely to participate, they can perform their jobs better, whether it is through friendlier service, faster responses, or greater overall helpfulness. This can improve their work and yield promising results. For the Board of Directors (BOD), this study can help them make smarter decisions for the bank. It will show them how members' loyalty and participation help the bank grow. With this knowledge, they can create better plans, improve services, and make policies that focus on the needs of the people they serve. It can also help the bank become more

stable and successful in the long run. The community also benefits from this study. It will show how important their support and involvement are to the bank's success. When people actively join and stay loyal to their local bank, it helps keep financial services accessible, especially in smaller areas like San Jose. In return, the community can enjoy better services and more opportunities for financial growth. Furthermore, this study can serve as a reference for future researchers conducting studies on members' loyalty, participation, and performance. It will provide useful data and a foundation for further studies exploring related topics or addressing other gaps in the banking sector.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study primarily focused on determining the relationships among members' loyalty, participation, and the performance of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. It also sought to determine the levels of members' loyalty, in terms of business ethics and roles and obligations, and participation in the performance of Rizal Microbank. The study was conducted during the Academic Year 2025-2026, specifically from July 2025 to March 2026. It used a survey questionnaire to gather data. Furthermore, the study was limited to the active members of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design. As explained by Creswell (1994), as cited in Kushendriawan et al. (2021), it is a quantitative design that describes variables and examines relationships among them without manipulating any variable, using both descriptive and inferential (correlational) questions. Descriptive research was used to determine the level of members' loyalty, participation, and performance of Rizal Microbank. Moreover, the correlational design was used to determine the significant relationship among the three identified variables.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of this study were the active members of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Prior to data collection, the researchers sent a formal request letter addressed to the branch manager to inquire about the number of active members. According to the information provided, the bank has 854 active depositors and 1,009 active borrowers, with a total of 1,863 active members. The sample size was computed using a Raosoft calculator with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Thus, out of 1,863 active members, the sample size is 319.

**Research Instrument** - The study used an adapted questionnaire from Galay (2022) to describe members' loyalty in terms of business ethics, roles and obligations, and participation in Rizal Microbank, while the questionnaire for performance was adapted from Abdullah et al. (2022). The researchers reviewed and slightly modified all the items to fit the context of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 5—Strongly Agree to 1—Strongly Disagree, to measure members' level of agreement with each statement. To validate the questionnaires, the researchers used expert validity. The statements regarding members' loyalty, participation, and performance at Rizal Microbank were reviewed by three experts in research and business from the Senior High School Department. The researchers fully incorporated the experts' opinions and suggestions to tailor the questions to the study's specific needs, ensuring accurate data collection. To assess the instrument's reliability, the researchers used an adapted questionnaire from Galay (2022). The reliability values were based on the pilot test conducted by Galay (2022), from whom the instrument was adapted. The results of the test are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Reliability Results of the Adapted Questionnaires*

VARIABLES	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA	INTERPRETATION
Members Loyalty			
Business Ethics and	10	0.875	Good
Roles and Obligations	10	0.805	Good
Participation	10	0.745	Acceptable
Performance	10	0.951	Excellent

\*Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items

Based on the Cronbach's alpha results, the instrument was valid and reliable and ready for administration to the final set of respondents.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers began by writing a letter to Rizal Microbank requesting permission to conduct the study. After approval, the researchers explained the study's instructions and nature and provided informed consent forms to ensure voluntary participation and privacy. The researchers distributed survey questionnaires face-to-face. The data gathering took place over two weeks, allowing sufficient time for members to answer the survey thoughtfully. Once all surveys were composed, the researchers reviewed them before proceeding to analyze the data.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - This study employed descriptive statistics, such as weighted means, to describe members' loyalty, participation, and performance at Rizal Microbank. Moreover, to determine if there is a significant relationship among members' loyalty, participation, and performance, Pearson's  $r$  moment correlation was used.

**Ethical Considerations** - In conducting this study, the researchers were guided by ethical considerations to ensure the rights, safety, and well-being of all participants. These measures were observed to promote a responsible and ethical research process. The researchers kept all personal information private. All the data gathered and shared by the members was kept confidential and used solely for the study. Moreover, the researchers made sure that no one was harmed or made to feel uncomfortable during the study. All questions and activities were safe and respectful. The researchers also ensured that participation in this study was entirely voluntary. The bank's staff involvement in distributing the questionnaires was solely for logistical purposes and did not influence members' freedom to participate or refuse. Respondents were allowed to withdraw or decline at any point without any consequences. Before answering the questionnaire, participants were also informed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to refuse participation. Only those who voluntarily agreed were included in the study.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Table 2 shows the mean levels of members' loyalty in terms of business ethics and roles and obligations, with an overall mean of 4.75, which is interpreted as a Very High Level. As for business ethics, the composite mean of 4.75, verbally interpreted as Very High Level, indicates that members demonstrate a high degree of loyalty. The consistently high weighted means across all indicators suggest that the members perceive Rizal Microbank as an institution that upholds ethical standards in its operations. This suggests that ethical practices help strengthen members' commitment and positive relationships with the bank. When members experience fairness, honesty, and integrity in their transactions, they are more likely to remain loyal and supportive of the institution. These findings were supported by Azmat (2022), who described business ethics as the moral standards guiding organizational behavior, and by Tran (2022), who emphasized the importance of business ethics in building long-term loyalty, particularly in the Philippine context.

The highest weighted mean of 4.85 was recorded on indicator no. 3, suggesting that members have developed a strong ethical and emotional connection with the bank. This may be attributed to the consistent application of ethical practices that foster trust and satisfaction. This result also supports the findings of Azhari et al. (2020) and Kumasey et al. (2016), who found that ethical organizational behavior positively influences members' loyalty, commitment, and willingness to continue availing services. Meanwhile, the lowest weighted means were observed for indicators related to concern about the bank's challenges and fear of taking actions that may harm the institution. Although still interpreted as Very High Level, these slightly lower scores may indicate that direct ethical interactions influence members more strongly than broader organizational concerns. Nevertheless, the overall findings confirm that business ethics significantly strengthen members' loyalty to Rizal Microbank, reinforcing trust, integrity, and long-term commitment.

**Table 2***Mean Level of Members' Loyalty in terms of Business Ethics and Roles and Obligations*

Indicators (Business Ethics)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I respect the management of Rizal Microbank	4.75	Very High Level
2. I avoid any actions that may harm the reputation or success of Rizal Microbank.	4.70	Very High Level
3. I feel good about my relationship with Rizal Microbank.	4.85	Very High Level
4. I show honesty in my dealings with Rizal Microbank.	4.79	Very High Level
5. I care about Rizal Microbank's incoming challenges.	4.66	Very High Level
6. I am afraid of doing any bad actions that will affect Rizal Microbank	4.66	Very High Level
7. I trust Rizal Microbank.	4.83	Very High Level
8. I respect the confidentiality of my transactions with Rizal Microbank.	4.82	Very High Level
9. I believe that Rizal Microbank upholds fairness in all its dealings with members.	4.84	Very High Level
10. I feel confident that Rizal Microbank consistently acts with integrity.	4.78	Very High Level
Composite Mean	4.75	High Level
Indicators (Roles and Obligations)		
1. I follow the rules and policies set by Rizal Microbank.	4.81	Very High Level
2. I follow the vision, mission, and goals of Rizal Microbank with all my heart.	4.83	Very High Level
3. I give feedback and suggestions on the activities of Rizal Microbank.	4.67	Very High Level
4. I am aware of my financial obligations.	4.67	Very High Level
5. I support the existing and new activities of my cooperative.	4.67	Very High Level
6. I contribute by depositing regularly in my Rizal Microbank account.	4.71	Very High Level
7. I recommend Rizal Microbank to other people.	4.77	Very High Level
8. I fulfill my responsibilities to Rizal Microbank without needing constant reminders.	4.75	Very High Level
9. I stay informed about the important announcements and updates from Rizal Microbank.	4.83	Very High Level
10. I take accountability for my actions in all my transactions with Rizal Microbank.	4.78	Very High Level
Composite Mean	4.75	Very High Level
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>Very High Level</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 2.00-1.79 Very Low Level

In addition, the composite mean of 4.75 indicates a Very High Level of member loyalty regarding roles and obligations. All ten statements received weighted means ranging from 4.67 to 4.83, with a composite mean of 4.75, indicating that the member's loyalty in fulfilling their roles and obligations is very high. This implies that members consistently comply with roles and obligations set by Rizal Microbank. The highest weighted mean was observed for statements 2 and 9, suggesting that members not only align with the organizational directions and goals but also actively seek information to remain engaged. These findings align with DeMott (2022), who emphasized that when members perceive their roles as both a task and a trust-based obligation, it builds long-term loyalty and commitment. The lowest weighted mean, 4.67, was observed for statements 4 and 5. Although still very high, these are slightly lower than the other statements, which may indicate that some members perceive financial obligation as routine or less engaging than other aspects of loyalty, and that participation in new initiatives might depend on personal interest or availability. This shows that while members are generally loyal, active engagement in newer programs may need more encouragement. In general, the high weighted means across all statements indicate that members understand their roles and obligations, which align with Dare's (2016) claims. He suggested that clearly defined roles with associated ethical and organizational expectations can enhance a sense of moral duty or loyalty. Similarly, Talonen et al. (2018) found that members who understand their roles and obligations develop a sense of ownership, resulting in deeper commitment and active participation. These findings indicate that members of Rizal Microbank not only fulfill their duties and responsibilities but also embrace them as a moral and trust-based obligation, thereby strengthening their loyalty and engagement with the cooperative.

**Table 3**  
*Mean Level of Members' Participation*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I actively participate in programs or activities organized by Rizal Microbank.	4.48	Very High Level
2. I actively participate in programs or activities organized by Rizal Microbank	4.40	Very High Level
3. I give feedback or suggestions to Rizal Microbank about its services or programs.	4.30	Very High Level
4. I take part in decision-making activities when given the opportunity.	4.30	Very High Level
5. I avail of, support the loan, deposit, and savings programs offered by Rizal Microbank.	4.40	Very High Level
6. I respond to information requests or surveys conducted by Rizal Microbank.	4.42	Very High Level
7. I encourage other members to participate in Rizal Microbank's programs and services.	4.50	Very High Level
8. I stay prepared for the upcoming activities of Rizal Microbank by organizing the documents and requirements.	4.50	Very High Level
9. I remain attentive to the outcomes of services provided by Rizal Microbank.	4.56	Very High Level
10. I keep my account active and regularly engage with the services I personally chose to use.	4.55	Very High Level
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>Very High Level</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 3 presents the mean level of members' participation in Rizal Microbank's programs and activities in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, measured across five key indicators on a 5-point Likert scale. The composite mean of 4.45 reflects very high participation overall, mainly because Rizal Microbank creates strong mutual accountability among members, they experience clear financial benefits such as improved loan terms and savings growth from consistent engagement, and the bank's local strategies effectively address the Occidental Mindoro community's needs to sustain long-term involvement. This is supported by Galay (2022), who found that high member participation rates significantly enhance cooperative governance and performance in Occidental Mindoro, mirroring the dynamics of microfinance groups. The highest mean of 4.56 indicates strong member participation, while the lowest mean of 4.30 indicates slight variations in the level of involvement. Overall, the findings show that members actively engage in Rizal Microbank's activities, consistent with studies linking participation to engagement and institutional commitment (Solem, 2016; Dong & Sivakumar, 2017).

**Table 4**  
*Mean Level of Performance*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I observe that Rizal Microbank provides its services on time.	4.79	Very High Level
2. I observe that Rizal Microbank regularly shares information with members.	5.00	Very High Level
3. I observe that Rizal Microbank is fair in its decision-making.	5.00	Very High Level
4. I observe that Rizal Microbank staff are responsive to any members' queries.	5.00	Very High Level
5. I observe that Rizal Microbank maintains transparency in the transaction process.	5.00	Very High Level
6. I observe that Rizal Microbank listens to members' suggestions.	5.00	Very High Level
7. I observe that Rizal Microbank helps members in dealing with other organizations.	5.00	Very High Level
8. I observe that Rizal Microbank gives attention to members' welfare.	5.00	Very High Level
9. I observe that Rizal Microbank gives attention to members' problems.	5.00	Very High Level
10. I observe that Rizal Microbank staff understand the needs of individual members.	4.60	Very High Level
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>4.94</b>	<b>Very High Level</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 4 presents the mean level of Rizal Microbank's performance, as perceived by its members. The composite mean of 4.94, which falls within the "Very High Level" range, suggests that members perceive Rizal Microbank's performance positively. This indicates that the bank is highly effective in executing its operations and maintaining good service quality. The highest mean of 5.00 was observed across multiple items, indicating the bank's commitment to excellence and member engagement. These findings align with Abdallah et al. (2016), who emphasized that good business outcomes result from effective management and attentiveness to members' needs. Similarly, Mistrean (2023) and Bai et al. (2020) support the idea that loyal members, who perceive the bank positively, contribute to engagement and higher service utilization, which may reinforce the high performance observed. On the other hand, the lowest mean, 4.60, was for staff understanding of individual members' needs. While still getting a "Very High Level" description, this slightly lower rating could indicate areas where individualized service or attention may be improved. These findings suggest that Rizal Microbank maintains excellent performance.

**Table 5***Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing ( $H_0$ )*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Members Loyalty (Business Ethics) → Performance	0.405	0.164	1.968	7.878	<0.001	Highly Significant
Members' Loyalty (Roles and Obligations) → Performance	0.445	0.198	1.968	8.846	<0.001	Highly Significant
Members' Loyalty → Performance	0.465	0.216	1.968	9.348	<0.001	Highly Significant
Members Participation → Performance	0.367	0.134	1.968	7.018	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value &lt; 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value &lt; 0.05 Significant

Table 5 shows the relationships among members' loyalty, participation, and the performance of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The correlation coefficient value of business ethics is 0.405, and its p-value is <0.001, followed by the roles and responsibilities' correlation coefficient value of 0.445 and p-value of <0.001, members' loyalty's correlation coefficient value of 0.465 and p-value of <0.001, and members' participation's correlation coefficient value of 0.367 and p-value of <0.001. This suggests that members' loyalty and participation are statistically significantly related to the performance of Rizal Microbank in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Specifically, members' loyalty to business ethics is moderately and positively correlated with performance, indicating a highly significant relationship. This implies that business ethics perceived by members are associated with better bank performance. This finding is similar to the studies by Tran (2022) and Azhari et al. (2020), in which business ethics play a crucial role in building members' loyalty and long-term relationships, which eventually translate into improved institutional outcomes. Moreover, members' loyalty in terms of roles and responsibilities shows a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that when members clearly understand and fulfill their responsibilities, the bank's overall performance improves. This is supported by DeMott (2022), who stated that perceiving roles as trust-based obligations enhances loyalty, and Talonen et al. (2018), who warned that the absence of ownership and responsibility among members may result in disengagement. Lastly, participation is also found to have a positive and highly significant relationship with performance. Although the correlation is slightly weaker than that with loyalty, it still indicates that members' active participation enhances business performance. This is consistent with Ahn and Rho (2021) and Solem (2016), who emphasized that participating members contribute to sustainability, trust, and value co-creation, all of which support better performance. Chen and Wang (2016) further reinforced this by showing that active participation, especially in services and programs, leads to value co-creation that drives organizational success.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study leads to the following conclusions. The results show that members of Rizal Microbank demonstrate a very high level of loyalty, shown through their strong ethical commitment and dedication to the bank's vision, mission, and goals. Their positive relationship with the bank and active attention to important updates reflect a consistent sense of responsibility, trust, and engagement that supports the bank's overall stability and operations. The study also shows that members stay attentive to the outcomes of the bank's services, demonstrating a high level of engagement in its activities. Their consistent involvement demonstrates active participation in Rizal Microbank's operations. In addition, results show that Rizal Microbank demonstrates excellent performance, consistently providing clear information, fair decisions, responsive service, and transparent transactions. The bank also prioritizes members' welfare, listens to suggestions, and supports them in addressing their concerns, demonstrating a strong commitment to its operations. The findings also show that Members' loyalty and participation have a strong effect on Rizal Microbank's performance in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Strengthening members' commitment, ethical behavior, and active engagement improves the bank's operations, service quality, and responsiveness. In addition, loyal and engaged members contribute to the bank's success, efficiency, and ability to meet the community's needs.

**Recommendations** - The following recommendations are based on the study's findings and conclusions. The Board of Directors (BOD) of Rizal Microbank may continue to strengthen its policies and strategies that promote members' alignment with the bank's vision, mission, and goals. Sustaining initiatives may help preserve members' strong sense of belonging and long-term commitment to the bank. Rizal Microbank's branch manager may continue ensuring consistent communication of institutional updates, service improvements, and organizational developments to members. Providing clear and timely information may sustain members' awareness, involvement, and confidence in the bank's operations. Bank employees may continue providing responsive, respectful, and transparent assistance to members. Maintaining high-quality service delivery and addressing members' concerns may help sustain members' trust, satisfaction, and active participation in the bank. Bank employees may continue demonstrating professionalism, fairness, and accountability in carrying out their tasks and responsibilities. Members' loyalty and support for the bank may be strengthened by upholding ethical standards and maintaining positive relationships with them. Future researchers may refer to this study for guidance on the loyalty, participation, and performance of a bank. Moreover, they might learn something from this research study about members' loyalty, participation, and performance. This may also give them answers to their questions about the particular sector.

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## The effect of supply condition on the business performance of gasoline stations

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### ***Abstract***

The increase in the number of gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, prompts an interest in the effects of supply conditions on business performance. This study aimed to determine the level of supply conditions and their relationship with business performance in gasoline stations. Specifically, this study sought to assess the level of supply conditions in gasoline stations in terms of supply schedule, gasoline management, and storage capacity. This study employed a descriptive-correlational research approach. Data were collected from 30 gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. A researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 38 items on a Likert scale was used as a data collection instrument. The findings of this study revealed that gasoline stations generally exhibit a stable supply condition. Gasoline stations exhibit effective gasoline management practices. Gasoline stations also exhibit effective gasoline management practices. Regarding the business performance of gasoline stations, the findings revealed a very high level, indicating that the overall performance of the gasoline stations in the area is highly commendable. This suggests that stations are effective in maintaining fuel availability, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness. The findings also revealed a significant relationship between the supply schedule and gasoline management in gasoline stations' business performance. Thus, this study recommends that gasoline station managers continue to improve their gasoline supply schedules and management strategies, as these factors can enhance their business performance and efficiency.

**Keywords:** business performance, gasoline management, supply condition, supply schedule, gasoline station

## The effect of supply condition on the business performance of gasoline stations

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the number of gas stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, has steadily increased, demonstrating that, for a relatively small and developing town, economic activity and business interest are continually growing. Not only have large, well-established petroleum companies entered the market, but even small-scale entrepreneurs and household owners are attempting to build and operate their own gasoline stations as a stable source of income, with support from the Department of Energy (2023). This trend reflects the rising demand for fuel, driven by population growth, increased vehicle ownership, tourism, and the expansion of transportation services in the municipality. While the growing number of gasoline stations may initially appear beneficial, promoting accessibility, convenience, employment, and local economic development, it may also lead to long-term challenges if not properly managed. One of the major concerns is the possibility of fuel oversupply in the town, which could negatively affect business sustainability and profitability, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2022). Provincial Product Accounts: Economic Performance of Occidental Mindoro. PSA Regional Statistical Services Office MIMAROPA.

As gasoline is a product with storage limitations, safety risks, and quality considerations, oversupply may lead to higher operational costs, fuel deterioration, and inventory management challenges (Mäkkä et al., 2024). Gasoline stations that are unable to sell their fuel within an optimal time frame may suffer losses, leading to unmet revenue expectations and financial instability. This situation can create a significant burden for station owners, especially small and newly established operators who may lack sufficient capital, advanced storage facilities, or effective supply management strategies (Petropoulos et al., 2026). Operational risks and sustainability in the retail fuel industry: A study on market saturation. Over time, this may result in business closures, market exit, or consolidation, which could harm the local business environment rather than strengthen it.

For every town, an important factor influencing this situation is that most, if not all, gasoline stations are being supplied by the same fuel supplier or a limited group of suppliers. This uniformity in supply sources limits the competitive advantage that individual gasoline stations could otherwise gain through pricing, fuel availability, or delivery efficiency. Because station owners have little control over supply volume, delivery schedules, and procurement costs, competition among gasoline stations becomes more intense and aggressive in the Philippine Competition Commission. (2020). Issues paper on the liquid fuel industry in the Philippines: Competition and market structure. Instead of competing through improved service quality or innovation, many stations are forced into price-based competition, which reduces profit margins and increases financial pressure on business owners.

Moreover, limited supply options restrict gasoline stations' flexibility to respond to sudden changes in demand, emergencies, or fluctuations in fuel prices. The challenges of fuel supply chains in archipelagic and rural environments: Philippines country study. Any disruption at the supplier level—such as delivery delays, logistical problems, or price increases—directly affects all gasoline stations in the area simultaneously. This lack of supply diversification increases vulnerability and risk, particularly in rural municipalities where alternative suppliers and infrastructure are limited. As a result, supply conditions play a critical role in determining the operational performance and financial outcomes of gasoline stations. National energy trends further influence local fuel supply conditions. According to the Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) 2023, the country's importation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) is projected to rise by 508 percent between 2025 and 2029, representing a sixfold increase. At the same time, domestic supply from the Malampaya gas field continues to decline, signaling a significant shift in the country's energy sourcing strategy. Although LNG is not directly used as vehicle fuel, this growing reliance on imported energy sources reflects broader structural changes in the Philippine fuel supply landscape.

As the Philippines becomes increasingly dependent on imported fuel and energy resources, the country

becomes more exposed to international market fluctuations, price volatility, and geopolitical risks (Agaton, 2022). Increases in global fuel prices, currency exchange rates, and shipping costs may indirectly affect gasoline prices and supply stability, according to Zero Carbon Analytics & the Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technology (CREST). (2023). Additionally, increased competition for port access, higher logistics costs, and rising electricity costs driven by higher power generation costs may further contribute to operational challenges for fuel suppliers. These factors can eventually be passed on to gasoline station owners, especially those operating in rural, geographically distant areas, such as towns.

Furthermore, rural gasoline stations often face unique challenges compared to those in urban centers. These include higher transportation costs, limited infrastructure, smaller customer bases, and reduced economies of scale (Kaiser & Barstow, 2022). When combined with unfavorable supply conditions, such challenges can significantly affect business performance, as measured by sales volume, profit margins, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. Understanding how supply conditions interact with these local realities is essential for identifying strategies to help gasoline station owners remain competitive and resilient (Rubio-Andrés et al., 2025). Thus, this study aims to investigate the effects of supply conditions on the business performance and profit margins of gasoline station owners in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Specifically, it seeks to examine how supply availability, supplier concentration, delivery reliability, pricing structures, and external energy trends influence operational outcomes. Understanding the impact of the growing number of gasoline stations and the limitations in supply options may help business owners, policymakers, and stakeholders develop more effective supply management strategies. Ultimately, this research aims to inform decision-making that supports sustainable business practices, fair competition, and long-term economic stability in the local fuel industry.

**Statement of the problem** - This study aimed to determine the effect of supply conditions on the business performance of gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Particularly, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of supply conditions in gasoline stations in terms of supply schedule, gasoline management, and storage capacity? (2) What is the level of business performance of gasoline stations? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of supply conditions and the level of business performance of gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro?

**Significance of the Study** - This study will have significant importance for the supply conditions and the business performance status of gasoline stations. The significance of this study lies in understanding the relationship between the level of supply conditions and the business performance status of gasoline stations. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights for several groups, including business owners, gasoline station operators, suppliers, fuel companies, local government, managers, customers, and future researchers. The results of this study will also help entrepreneurs understand how supply conditions influence business performance. Through this research, business owners can ensure consistent product availability, enhance customer satisfaction, manage operational costs effectively, and improve overall profitability. This study will assist gasoline station operators in recognizing the importance of supply conditions and their impact on business performance. By applying the knowledge gained from this research, operators may improve their inventory management practices and customer service, leading to more efficient operations. The findings of this research will also help local government units better understand how regulations, policies, and supply conditions affect gasoline station performance. This knowledge can guide them in creating effective policies that support fair business practices and stable fuel distribution. Suppliers will benefit from this study by gaining insights into how supply conditions affect the operational efficiency and profitability of gasoline stations. Since suppliers play a crucial role in providing fuel products, understanding these relationships can help them improve coordination, reliability, and supply management. This research will help fuel companies understand the connection between supply conditions and business performance. The findings may guide them in maintaining stable fuel supply systems, improving distribution strategies, and ensuring sustainable business growth. The results of the study may help managers and executives make informed decisions and develop effective business strategies. Understanding the impact of supply conditions will help them organize operations more efficiently and improve gasoline station performance. Customers may benefit from this study's results through more stable fuel prices, improved services, and reliable

fuel availability. Better supply management can enhance the overall consumer experience in gasoline stations. This study will serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to conduct similar studies related to supply conditions and business performance. It will provide additional knowledge and guidance for further research in this field.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study investigates the effect of supply conditions on the business performance of gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. It specifically examines supply conditions and how they influence selected indicators of business performance. The scope of the study is limited to gasoline stations within the bayan (town proper) of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, excluding stations in other barangays or in nearby municipalities. A total of thirty 30 gasoline stations within the bayan area were included in the study. Moreover, the respondents of this research primarily consist of gasoline station employees, as they are directly involved in daily operations and are knowledgeable about supply-related concerns. In cases where access is granted, station managers' opinions may also be included in the data. The study does not include customers, suppliers, or government agencies. Data collection for this research was conducted only from December 2025 to January 2026, and findings were limited to the conditions observed during this time frame.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study used a descriptive correlational research design. According to Creswell (2022), descriptive and correlational research designs are quantitative approaches that enable researchers to describe variables and examine statistical relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them. This design is appropriate for studies that aim to identify patterns, problems, or relationships among variables in a real-life setting. In this study, a descriptive approach was used to examine the supply conditions and business performance of gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Meanwhile, a correlational approach was used to examine the relationship between supply conditions and gasoline stations' business performance. Through this design, the study aimed to provide a clear understanding of how supply conditions are associated with the overall performance of gasoline stations.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents in this study were employees and managers of 30 gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. There are 45 employees and 45 managers, with a total of 90 respondents who participated in the survey. They were all included since the population is too small.

**Research Instrument** - This study used a researcher-made questionnaire to determine the level of business performance of gasoline stations in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. A researcher-made instrument was used because no existing or adapted questionnaires specifically measured the variables of this study. The questionnaire consists of thirty-eight (38) items divided into four sections: Supply Schedule – 6 items, Gasoline Management – 6 items, Storage Capacity – 6 items, and Business Performance – 10 items. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each statement by using a four-point Likert scale, where 4 – Strongly Agree, 3 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher-made questionnaire on supply conditions and business performance of gasoline stations was subjected to expert validation. Three experts from the Senior High School Department of the Divine Word College of San Jose reviewed the questionnaire to assess its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. The researchers humbly sought their expertise and feedback to ensure that the questionnaire accurately measures what it is intended to measure. Necessary revisions were made based on the experts' recommendations to improve the instrument's content and validity.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers first prepared a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study. The letters were sent to all 30 gasoline stations located in the bayan of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. After sending the letters, the researchers waited for approval from the gasoline station management. Once permission was granted, the researchers began distributing the researcher-made questionnaires to the gasoline station employees and, where available, the managers. The data collection period commenced in the second week

of December 2025 and concluded in January 2026. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researchers to ensure clarity of instructions and to minimize response errors. The researchers also ensured that the process was conducted without bias, allowing respondents to answer honestly and freely. All completed questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, and organized for analysis.

**Statistical Treatment of Data** - This study employed descriptive statistics, such as weighted mean, to determine the level of financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Moreover, to determine if there is a significant relationship between the financial behavior and spending habits of senior high school students, Pearson's r moment correlation coefficient was used. It is a statistical measure that assesses the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables.

**Ethical Considerations** - Before the study was conducted, the researchers sent a consent letter to each gasoline station owner/manager and staff member to request permission to participate. The letter of consent provides brief information about the researchers' study. The personal information of the owner/manager and staff is not required to be included in the questionnaires to ensure and protect their privacy. However, the gas stations' names are included in the questionnaires. Therefore, only the researchers can see the answers in the survey. Lastly, the researchers used the APA 7th edition style for references.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the mean level of supply conditions in terms of supply schedule and gasoline management, with an overall mean of 3.22, which is interpreted as High Level. For the supply schedule, its composite mean of 3.26 is interpreted as Very High Level, which means that the supply is highly reliable, as suppliers always deliver the product on time, communicate effectively, and adhere to the delivery schedule. This supports Nowakoski (2016), who emphasized that maintaining baseline supply conditions ensures reliability and fairness in fuel distribution. The statement “Delivery of fuels always arrives on the scheduled date” received the highest mean of 3.62, highlighting that punctuality is the strongest aspect of supply schedule management. Timely deliveries prevent disruptions in station operations and improve efficiency and planning accuracy. This aligns with Ni and Sun (2019), who found that effective supply schedule management and coordinated delivery practices enhance overall business performance.

On the other hand, the statement “Fuel delivery delays rarely occur” recorded the lowest average, 3.00. Though still positive, this shows that minor delays may happen from time to time, hence the need to always keep a watchful eye on this factor. According to Liu et al. (2024), minor delays may affect the efficiency and profitability of the business; hence, there is a need to monitor this factor closely. Based on the results, a well-managed supply schedule positively affects the supply conditions at gasoline stations. This is further supported by Arab and Lashaki (2023), who emphasized that the efficiency of the gasoline supply chain may be improved through proper scheduling and notification of the supply schedule.

**Table 1**  
*Mean Level of Supply Conditions in terms of Supply Schedule, Gasoline Management, and Storage Capacity*

Indicators (Supply Schedule)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. Deliveries of fuel always arrive on the scheduled date	3.62	Very High Level
2. The supplier follows the delivery timetable	3.20	High Level
3. When there is a sudden change in the delivery schedule due to unexpected circumstances, the supplier immediately notifies us	3.31	Very High Level
4. The delivery volume of fuel is the same as what was ordered by the management	3.19	High Level
5. Fuel delivery delays rarely occur	3.00	High Level
6. The supplier gives us an estimated delivery time before shipping the fuel	3.26	Very High Level
Composite Mean	3.26	High Level

Indicators (Gasoline Management)		
1. Problems with fuel contamination rarely occur.	3.24	High Level
2. Proper gasoline management methods are taught to our employees before performing our fuel-related duties	3.03	High Level
3. Our management uses a system ( logbook, app) to track sales	3.11	High Level
4. Our management chooses a gasoline provider that offers better pricing.	3.27	Very High Level
5. I follow a regular maintenance schedule to improve fuel sales.	3.21	High Level
6. I believe I still need to improve the way I manage the gasoline station.	3.24	Very High Level
Composite Mean	3.18	High Level
Indicators (Storage Capacity)		
1. The area of gasoline storage is properly maintained and safe.	3.00	High Level
2. The storage containers are regularly checked for any damage and levels.	3.58	Very High Level
3. The proper storage for gasoline capacity is essential for safe and effective operations.	3.01	High Level
4. The gasoline storage capacity can handle a sudden increase in gasoline demand	3.27	Very High Level
5. The management is aware of the limits of our gasoline storage tanks or containers.	3.08	High Level
6. There are proper guidelines that must be followed when storing gasoline.	3.32	Very High Level
Composite Mean	3.25	Very High Level
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>Very High Level</b>

Legend: 4,00 - 3.25 Very high, 3.24 - 2.50 High, 2.49 - 1.75 Low, 1.74-1.00 Very low

In addition, the supply condition in terms of gasoline management has a composite mean of 3.18, which is interpreted as a high level. This indicates that supply condition practices related to gasoline station management are generally well implemented and satisfactory. This implies that practices for contamination control, maintenance, pricing strategies, monitoring systems, and operational procedures are consistently maintained to ensure the reliability of the fuel supply. This finding supports Susilawati (2016), who emphasized that efficient inventory and operational management are key determinants of gasoline station performance and help prevent costly stock shortages or excessive inventory. The statement “Our management selects a gasoline supplier with better pricing” received the highest mean, 3.27. Hence, this shows that the management's strategy for selecting gasoline suppliers and its pricing strategy is effective in managing the gasoline station. By selecting the best suppliers, the gasoline station can achieve greater operational efficiency. Indeed, Silva et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of strategic sourcing and working with competent suppliers, such as through Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI), to improve supply chain coordination and reduce operational uncertainties.

Meanwhile, the statement “Proper gasoline management methods are taught to our employees before performing fuel-related duties” received the lowest mean of 3.03. Although still interpreted as High, this suggests that employee training and knowledge development need further strengthening. Proper training also ensures that employees adopt appropriate fuel-handling procedures, maintain fuel quality, and minimize operational risks. This is consistent with the study findings of Ilagan and Perez (2024), which observed that effective management practices and fuel-handling procedures contribute to sustainable operations and shape customer trust and decision-making at gasoline stations. Based on the study findings, it is evident that gasoline management practices are well implemented in maintaining supply conditions. However, training and operational monitoring need to be improved to boost the efficiency of the gasoline station's operations. This is consistent with the findings of Silva et al. (2024), who observed that effective supply chain management practices and supplier-manager coordination enhance stability and reduce operational uncertainties in fuel operations.

The composite mean for supply conditions, in terms of storage capacity, is 3.25, which is interpreted as a Very High level. This indicates that gasoline stations' supply condition management was highly effective in terms of storage capacity. This means that the storage handling, safety, monitoring, and storage tanks of the gasoline stations were well managed, thus ensuring the constant availability of the products. The effectiveness of gasoline station

storage capacity management was very important, as noted by Jou et al. (2023). They noted that the reliability of fuel availability was a very important factor in customer satisfaction. The statement “The storage containers are regularly checked for any damages and levels” obtained the highest mean of 3.58, indicating that monitoring of storage tanks is the strongest aspect of storage management. Regular inspections also prevent fuel leaks, contamination, and safety hazards. According to Baker (2007, as cited in Isiah et al., 2024), knowing the demand and quality at each station helps suppliers meet operational needs more efficiently, reducing the likelihood of conflicts between supply and demand. Conversely, the statement “The area of gasoline storage is properly maintained and safe” received the lowest mean of 3.00 (High). While still satisfactory, this suggests that physical facility maintenance and environmental safety measures require further improvement.

Additionally, maintenance procedures and structural safety checks could be improved to support effective management of storage capacity. This has also been supported by Craig et al. (2016), who emphasized the importance of effective inventory and storage management, as it helps prevent disruptions in the supply chain, thus building trust with customers. Overall, the results clearly indicate that the storage capacity management is highly effective, with inspection procedures being the most effective, while facility maintenance has scope for improvement. This has also been supported by the Supplier Competency and Supply Integration Model by Da Silva et al. (2024), which is highly relevant for the effective management of gasoline stations in San Jose, as supply chain stability is critical.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Business Performance of Gasoline Station*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. There is a high level of customer satisfaction.	3.37	Very High
2. The gasoline station maintains enough fuel inventory to ensure we never run out of product during operating hours.	3.33	Very High
3. Our sales remain steady every day.	3.22	High
4. Our gasoline station consistently meets our daily sales target through reliable fuel availability.	3.18	High
5. Fuel shortages rarely disrupt daily operations.	3.14	High
6. The station's pricing strategy for fuel makes it competitive compared to other gasoline stations.	3.14	High
7. Our gasoline station effectively retains customers by ensuring consistent fuel availability.	3.33	Very High
8. The number of customers is increasing every day.	3.29	Very High
9. The gasoline stations were able to meet their long-term goal.	3.28	Very High
10. The gasoline stations handle the customer's needs.	3.43	Very High
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>High Level</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00 Very High Level; 3.40 -4.19 High Level; 2.60-3.39 Moderate Level; 1.80-2.59 Low Level; 1.00-1.79 Very Low Level

Table 2 presents the composite mean of business performance for gasoline Stations in the area, which is 3.27, interpreted as a Very High level. This shows that the overall performance of the gasoline stations in the area is highly commendable. This suggests that stations are effective in maintaining fuel availability, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness. This supports Ni and Sun (2019), who emphasized that efficient supply chain management and demand-side value creation contribute directly to improved operational outcomes and business success. The statement “The gasoline stations handle the customer’s needs” received the highest mean of 3.43, highlighting that customer service is the strongest aspect of performance. Attentiveness to customer complaints and expectations contributes to satisfaction, loyalty, and a steady flow of clients. This aligns with the theory of Supply Chain Management Practices (Aslam et al., 2024), who noted that effective information sharing and responsible operations positively influence customer trust and decision-making. At the same time, the findings of the lowest mean of 3.14 on the statements “The daily operations of the gasoline station are rarely disrupted by fuel shortages” and “The gasoline station’s pricing strategy makes it competitive compared to other gasoline stations” indicate minor areas of improvement further to enhance the business performance of the gasoline station. This was further reinforced by Gupta et al. (2021), who found that the implementation of circular economy practices improves business performance efficiency. Generally, the findings revealed that the gasoline stations in San Jose have very high business performance, especially in the areas of customer services and operational

reliability, which was further reinforced by Ching et al. (2021), who stated that the implementation of eco-innovation strategies improves the sustainable business performance of an organization in various aspects, such as the economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing(H0)*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Supply Condition (Schedule) → Performance	0.303	0.092	1.994	2.697	0.009	Significant
Supply (Gasoline Condition Management) → Performance	-0.249	0.062	1.994	2.180	0.032	Significant
Supply Condition (Storage Capacity) → Performance	-0.022	0.000	1.994	0.189	0.851	Not Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis, which tested the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between supply condition and business performance. The findings show different results across the three indicators of supply condition: supply schedule, gasoline management, and storage capacity. For Supply Schedule and business performance, the correlation coefficient is  $r = 0.303$  with a p-value of 0.009, which is less than 0.05. This indicates a significant positive relationship between delivery schedule and business performance. Although the coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.092$ ) indicates a small effect size, it shows that improvements in delivery schedules can enhance performance, as timely and reliable delivery helps maintain fuel availability and increase customer satisfaction. For Gasoline Management and business performance, the correlation coefficient is  $r = -0.249$ , and the p-value is 0.032, which is less than 0.05. The effect size is  $r^2 = 0.062$ , indicating that only 6.2 percent of the variation in performance is attributable to gasoline management practices. It can be seen that variation in management practices has a small effect on performance, specifically on storage Capacity and Business Performance.

On the other hand, Storage Capacity has a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.022$  and a p-value of 0.851, which is greater than 0.05; hence, the relationship is not significant for business performance. The effect size  $r^2 \approx 0.000$  indicates that the difference in business performance is not attributable to differences in storage capacity. This shows that although proper storage mechanisms are vital to the safety of gasoline stations, they do not directly affect their overall business performance. Based on the results obtained, the following conclusions have been drawn: supply schedule and gasoline management are significantly related to business performance, whereas storage capacity is not. This conclusion is consistent with the arguments of Ni and Sun (2019) that efficient supply scheduling and demand-side value creation significantly affect business performance outcomes.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, gasoline stations exhibit a very high level of supply scheduling, indicating that gasoline supply is well managed and reliable. This is because gasoline stations can operate continuously through effective supply management. In addition, gasoline stations have high levels of gasoline management practices, which implies that their management is effective. The study also shows that gasoline stations have a very high level of storage capacity management, indicating that storage facilities are well maintained to support gasoline supply. Moreover, no significant relationship was found with storage capacity, indicating that the availability of storage facilities does not affect the business performance of gasoline stations. The findings also showed a significant relationship in the supply schedule of gasoline management, indicating that the supply schedule of gasoline has a positive effect on the business performance of gasoline stations.

**Recommendations** - Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed. The owners and managers of gasoline stations may maintain their organized and reliable gasoline supply schedules by improving coordination and communication with their suppliers to ensure an uninterrupted gasoline

supply. Their gasoline station management may also improve by enhancing their inventory monitoring systems and operational procedures, and by ensuring that their employees are properly oriented and trained in gasoline management and handling. In addition, employees at gasoline stations may continue to improve and regularly inspect their storage facilities to ensure that their storage tanks are safe and functional enough to support uninterrupted gasoline supplies. Although storage capacity was not found to affect business performance, gasoline stations may still maintain proper standards for their storage facilities to avoid operational risks and comply with regulatory requirements. Moreover, gasoline station managers may continue to improve their gasoline supply schedules and management strategies, as these factors can enhance their business performance and efficiency. Furthermore, future researchers may explore other factors affecting business performance, such as marketing strategies, competition, pricing policies, and customer service quality, to provide a broader understanding of the determinants of performance.

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## Religious practices and the service engagement of catholic senior high school students

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### **Abstract**

This study determined the relationship between religious practices and service engagement among Catholic Senior High School students of Divine Word College of San Jose during the Academic Year 2024-2026. Using a descriptive correlational design, data were collected from 168 out of 412 students through a validated 25-item questionnaire rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The findings revealed a Very High level of religious practices in recollection activities and Mass attendance, indicating that students consistently and actively participate in spiritual formation programs and religious celebrations. Retreat participation was rated High, indicating that students generally engage in retreats, though slightly less consistently than in other religious activities. Service engagement was also rated Very High in community extension activities and donation drives, demonstrating that students frequently involve themselves in outreach efforts and willingly offer their time, effort, and resources to assist others. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient revealed a strong, highly significant positive correlation between religious practices and service engagement, indicating that greater involvement in religious activities is closely associated with greater participation in service-related initiatives. These results suggest that sustained engagement in religious formation activities contributes to students' active involvement in community service and outreach programs. Thus, this study recommends that the student council and other student organizations may take active roles in planning and leading community extension and donation drive activities. Moreover, the school may establish regular, consistent service programs to maintain

students' high level of participation in community service.

**Keywords:** religious practices, service engagement, catholic education, faith-based education, participation in community

## Religious practices and the service engagement of catholic senior high school students

### 1. Introduction

Religion is a broad cultural system that encompasses rituals, prayers, and worship to connect with the divine and express faith. This also addresses the moral and ethical principles that guide behavior and decision-making. (Liyanapathirana & Akroyd, 2023). In a school setting, religion is expressed through religious practices, which helps students form their sense of service. The study "Local Beliefs and Religious Practices of Parmalim in North Sumatra" by Marahuddin et al. (2025) reveals that religious practices are not merely cultural traditions but meaningful expressions of faith that shape members' values, attitudes, and behaviors. Religion plays a vital role in forming identity, strengthening responsibility, and fostering a strong sense of community belonging. Moreover, the study emphasizes that consistent participation in religious practices reinforces commitment to shared values and promotes active involvement within the community.

Community extension activities are programs and initiatives that enable individuals to apply religious values in practical ways that benefit the wider community. The study by Agustina and Saona (2025) highlights how religious extension workers influence the development of religious moderation through community outreach and educational programs. These efforts help individuals cultivate values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and social responsibility. Continuous involvement in such activities encourages active participation in service-oriented initiatives, demonstrating how religious practice can translate into meaningful action. At Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ), students' engagement in community extension programs reflects the integration of religious values with concrete efforts to serve and support the community.

According to the news article by Divine Word College of San Jose (2024), senior high school students (SHS) engage in religious practices or faith-related activities such as recollections and masses as well as community services, or the tasks carried out by the students to benefit the local community, such as donation drives, clean-up drives, and outreach programs that allow the students to be involved and contribute not only inside the school but also outside the school premises or in the larger community. These activities contribute to the formation of students' sense of service. The SHS students of DWCSJ are a meaningful group to study because their development goes beyond academics. The values also shape their growth and the school's experiences (Divine Word College of San Jose, 2024). As one of the Catholic institutions in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, DWCSJ emphasizes spiritual formation for senior high school students through activities such as recollections that allow students to reflect and develop a closer relationship with God, and masses that strengthen students' service engagement by nurturing values of faith and community. At the same time, the school keeps the importance of service engagement, or the student's involvement in acts of service, by encouraging participation in outreach programs where the students extend help to individuals, groups, or communities; donation drives where the students gather goods, supplies, or resources to share with those in need; and environmental clean-up drives where students help clean and maintain school community surroundings. This study seeks to examine whether there is a significant correlation between religious practices and service engagement among Catholic senior high school students at the Divine Word College.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the correlation between religious practices and service engagement of senior high school students from Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of religious practices observed by the SHS students, as assessed by the frequency of their participation in recollection activities, attending mass (e.g., Sunday or First Friday Mass), and retreat? (2) What is the level of Service Engagement demonstrated by the SHS students, as quantified by their involvement in terms of community extensions and donation drives? (3) Is there a significant correlation between the students' level of religious practices (recollection activities, attending mass, retreats) and their level of service engagement (community extension activities and donation drive activities)?

**Significance of the Study** - This scientific investigation examined how religious practices instigated by Divine Word College of San Jose influence the participation of Senior High School Catholic Students of the said institution in community service. The study could help students see that attending Masses and participating in recollections and retreats are not only requirements for graduation but also opportunities to build their values and sincerely learn and grow in service to others. Also, the study may guide teachers in connecting lessons with values such as compassion, responsibility, and service, allowing them to encourage students to apply what they learn in class to real-life community involvement. In addition, the study may help the school administration understand how the school's religious practices influence students' involvement in service activities. It may also serve as a basis for improving or strengthening programs that promote the school's mission of forming students who live out faith, service, and responsibility in the community. The study and its results may inspire collaboration between students and community organizations. The research may also support students in developing empathy and compassion to address some of the unmet needs of people in their communities. Thus, the study may help Catholic institutions understand how religious practices can encourage students to become more involved in service and outreach activities. It may also serve as a basis for strengthening faith-based programs that promote compassion, responsibility, and active service to others, especially among the youth. Lastly, this study may serve as a guide for future researchers seeking to explore the connection among religion, compassion, and community service.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study aimed to determine if there is a correlation between religious practices and service initiatives among Senior High School students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Researchers gathered information by administering a survey questionnaire to respondents about their religious practices (participation in Mass, prayer, recollection, and other faith-based activities) and their involvement in service initiatives (Donation drives, outreach cleanup drives, and other community involvement). The study was conducted during the Academic Year 2025-2026. The information collected from the students was the basis for the researchers' further conclusions. The conclusions drawn from this study will not set the global standards of how religious practices correlate with service initiatives. Furthermore, their responses were based on perceptions of the relationship between these two variables among Divine Word College of San Jose's Senior High School students. Moreover, the questionnaires used for this study were administered face-to-face by the researcher. The study used a Likert-type questionnaire to solicit information. The study is limited to Senior High School students currently enrolled at Divine Word College of San Jose during the 2025-2026 academic year who are Catholic.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, a non-experimental quantitative approach used to describe variable characteristics and examine naturally occurring relationships between them without manipulating the variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, a descriptive design was used to describe the levels of religious practices and service engagement. Moreover, a correlational design was used to determine the significant relationship between the two variables.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of the study were the catholic senior high school students of Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level (Ellen, 2022), the computed sample size from a total population of 412 students was 168. The respondents were chosen using simple random sampling to avoid biases.

**Research Instrument** - The study used a researcher-made questionnaire based on the researchers' readings. A 4-point Likert scale of Level of Agreement was applied: (4) strongly agree, (3) agree, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree. To ensure the validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaires, the researchers used expert validation. Three faculty members of Divine Word College of San Jose, particularly from the Senior High School Department, were involved in the validation. They examined and checked the statements under the variables, which are (a) Religious Practices and (b) Service Engagement. The three experts, together with the research adviser, evaluated the clarity, appropriateness, and reliability and validity of each item in the questionnaire to ensure that the instrument is suitable and accurate for the study. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the

final copy of the instrument.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - Before conducting the survey, the researchers asked permission from the research adviser, the Senior High School Academic Coordinator, and the Basic Education Principal of Divine Word College of San Jose to distribute the survey questionnaires to Senior High School Catholic students. After receiving approval, the researchers coordinated with class advisers and presidents to schedule the proper time for data collection. The tool used in this study is a paper-based survey questionnaire prepared by the researchers and reviewed by their adviser. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) and had two parts: the first focused on religious practices, while the second focused on service engagement. The researchers personally distributed the survey forms to respondents and collected them 2 days later. Respondents were given enough time to answer, and the forms were collected immediately after completion. The gathered data were organized, tallied, and analyzed using simple descriptive and correlational analyses to compute means and assess the relationship between the two variables. All participants were asked to answer the survey honestly and sincerely. All information was treated with confidentiality and only used for academic research purposes.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - To analyze the data, the researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the level of religious practices and service engagement among the students; thus, the weighted mean was computed. Moreover, inferential statistics were used to test the significant relationship between the two variables. In this study, Pearson’s R Moment Correlation was applied.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researchers assumed that the respondents answered the survey questionnaire honestly and sincerely, based on their actual practices and experiences. The respondents’ participation in the study was voluntary; therefore, the respondents also had the freedom to decline or withdraw at any time without consequences. The confidentiality of the respondents was strictly observed; no personal names or identifying information was requested or recorded in the survey. All data collected was used solely for academic purposes and was treated with utmost respect and privacy. The researchers also ensured that the questions included in the survey do not cause harm, discomfort, or offense to the participants, as they pertain only to specific religious practices and service-engaged activities commonly experienced by the SHS Catholic students of DWCSJ.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Religious Practices in terms of Recollection Activities, Attending Mass, and Retreat*

Indicators (Recollection Activities)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I actively participate in recollection activities organized by the school.	3.22	High
2. Recollection activities help me reflect on my faith and personal values.	3.33	Very High
3. I take recollection activities seriously.	3.25	High
4. The lessons from recollection activities motivate me to help others.	3.30	Very High
5. I find that the quiet time during recollections allows me to understand my purpose in life better.	3.40	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.30	Very High
Indicators (Attending Mass)		
1. I regularly attend school masses.	3.46	Very High
2. Attending mass strengthens my faith.	3.48	Very High
3. I participate attentively during the Mass.	3.42	Very High
4. Attending Mass encourages me to serve others.	3.27	Very High
5. I find that the homilies (sermons) during Mass provide practical guidance on how to live a life of service.	3.46	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.42	Very High
Indicators (Retreat)		
1. I actively participate in school retreat activities.	3.15	High
2. Retreat activities help me grow spiritually.	3.16	High
3. I feel closer to God after attending a retreat.	3.22	High
4. My retreat experiences inspire me to become more helpful to others.	3.20	High
5. The spiritual atmosphere of a retreat makes me more aware of the needs of the marginalized in society.	3.23	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.19	High
OVERALL MEAN	3.30	Very High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 1 presents the mean levels of religious practices, including recollection activities, attendance at Mass, and retreats, with an overall mean of 3.33, interpreted as high. The composite mean of 3.30 for recollection activities, interpreted as Very High, indicates that students actively participate in recollection activities. The results indicate that recollection plays an important role in students’ spiritual lives. This finding aligns with Yusuf and Razak (2023), who found that students who regularly participate in religious activities exhibit stronger moral awareness and positive behavior. Moreover, the highest mean of 3.40 indicates that students reflect deeply on their life purpose and personal values during recollection. This suggests that recollection helps students think seriously about their actions and decisions. The findings interpreted are parallel with Latifah and Nurhikmah (2024), who explained that guided spiritual reflection strengthens self-understanding and responsible behavior. This supports the significant finding that recollection promotes self-awareness among students.

Regarding attending Mass, the indicators had a composite mean of 3.42, interpreted as Very High. This shows that students consistently attend Mass and actively participate in religious services. The result indicates that Mass is a strong part of their faith practice. This finding is identical to Aksoy et al.’s (2024) statement that regular participation in religious services strengthens faith commitment and encourages positive moral behavior among young people. The highest mean indicates that students listen carefully to the homily and apply the lessons in daily life. This suggests that students not only attend Mass but also practice what they learn. This finding aligns with Calimag et al. (2024), who explained that participation in religious gatherings fosters discipline and social responsibility.

Lastly, regarding retreat, a composite mean of 3.19 (interpreted as High) indicates that students actively participate in retreat activities. This means retreats help students reflect on their lives and grow in their faith. The findings show that retreats support personal development and increase students’ awareness of others. This finding is similarly aligned with the study by Ben-Namer and Zion-Waldoks (2025), who explain that real spiritual experiences help individuals develop a deeper sense of meaning and become more caring toward others. The highest mean shows that students become more aware of the needs of marginalized groups. This means retreats help students develop empathy and understanding of others, support personal development, and increase students’ awareness of others. This finding correlates with Shariff et al. (2015), who explained that religious involvement is associated with helping behavior and moral awareness, and with Marahuddin et al. (2025), who explained that religious practices help strengthen moral values and community-oriented behavior.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Service Engagement in terms of Community Extension and Donation Drive*

Indicators (Community Extension)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I willingly participate in community extension activities organized by the school.	3.32	Very High
2. I feel motivated to join community extension activities because of my religious values.	3.25	High
3. Community extension activities help me become more compassionate toward others.	3.31	Very High
4. I believe that my faith influences my willingness to help the community.	3.38	Very High
5. I prioritize joining community extension programs because I see them as a way to live out my Christian identity as a student of DWCSJ.	3.29	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.31	Very High
Indicators (Donation Drive)		
1. I participate in donation drives organized by the school.	3.34	Very High
2. My religious beliefs encourage me to donate or help during donation drives.	3.36	Very High
3. Donation drives allow me to practice the values I learn from religious activities.	3.32	Very High
4. I believe that my participation in religious practices influences my involvement in donation drives.	3.37	Very High
5. I am more willing to share my resources in donation drives when I realize that giving is a central part of my religious devotion.	3.44	Very High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.37	Very High
OVERALL MEAN	3.34	Very High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 2 presents the mean level of service engagement in terms of community extension and donation drives, with an overall mean of 3.34, interpreted as very high. The composite mean of 3.31 for “Community extension activities help me become more compassionate toward others” indicates a very high level, suggesting that students strongly participate in community extension programs. This indicates that students actively engage in community

outreach and develop a sense of responsibility and social awareness. This result is consistent with the findings of Bird et al. (2016), who explained that volunteering helps students develop responsibility and personal growth through service experiences. The 3.38, interpreted as the highest mean, revealed that students' willingness to help the community is influenced by their faith, meaning they participate because of personal values rather than solely because it is required. This finding is aligned with Agustina and Saona (2025), who explained that religious outreach encourages socially responsible behavior. Moreover, the findings also show that community service helps students become more compassionate and socially aware. This aligns with Fernandez-Martin and Ayllón-Salas (2026), who found that service-learning strengthens helping behavior and civic awareness among students.

Additionally, for donation drives, the composite mean of 3.37 indicates a very high level. This implies that students demonstrate strong service engagement in donation drives and actively participate in charitable activities. This shows that donation drives are meaningful to them and that they willingly share their time and resources to help others. Their strong engagement suggests that charitable activities are not merely school requirements but are connected to their internal values and sense of responsibility toward the community. This finding aligns with the Pew Research Center (2016), which stated that individuals who regularly attend religious services are more likely to donate money and participate in volunteer activities because religious teachings encourage kindness, generosity, and helping those in need. This relates to the present findings because students exposed to religious practices may similarly be influenced to participate in donation drives as an expression of compassion and responsibility shaped by faith-based teachings. The highest mean (3.44) was recorded in the statement, "I am more willing to share my resources in donation drives because I view giving as a core expression of my faith." This indicates that students directly connect donation drives to their religious beliefs and see giving as a concrete way to live out their faith. This is supported by Xie et al. (2020), who found that religious belief significantly influences charitable behavior, as individuals who actively practice their faith tend to feel a stronger moral responsibility toward those in need. Their study supports why students associate giving with faith expression. Similarly, the study by Mejia and Tindale (2025) found that engaging in one prosocial behavior, such as volunteering, often encourages additional helping behaviors, such as donating, creating a cycle of positive action. This connects to the present result because students who are already involved in service-related activities may be more inclined to continue helping through donation drives. Furthermore, Henderson et al. (2025) observed that adolescents who participate in volunteer and service programs tend to exhibit stronger social engagement and responsibility, which helps explain why students demonstrate very high participation in donation-related initiatives.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing ( $H_0$ )*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Religious Practices (Recollection Activities)→ Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.647	0.419	1.976	10.933	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Attending Mass)→ Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.641	0.411	1.976	10.760	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Retreat)→ Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.560	0.313	1.976	8.709	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices → Service Engagement (Community Extension)	0.733	0.537	1.976	13.884	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Recollection Activities)→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Activities)	0.566	0.321	1.976	8.846	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Attending Mass)→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Activities)	0.625	0.390	1.976	10.316	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices (Retreat)→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Activities)	0.469	0.220	1.976	6.842	<0.001	Highly Significant
Religious Practices→ Service Engagement (Donation Drive Practices)	0.655	0.429	1.976	11.168	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 3 summarizes the correlation coefficients, effect sizes, computed t-values, and p-values to determine the significance of the relationship between religious practices and service engagement among Catholic senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. The overall correlation coefficient,  $r = 0.755$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicates a highly significant positive relationship between religious practices and service engagement. This means that students who actively participate in recollections, Mass, and retreats tend to demonstrate stronger involvement in community extension and donation drives. Specifically, the relationship between recollection and community extension ( $r = 0.647$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) indicates that students who actively participate in recollection activities tend to engage more in outreach programs. This finding supports the findings of Yusuf and Razak (2023), who reported that religiosity is positively associated with prosocial behavior because religious involvement encourages empathy and moral responsibility. Likewise, the correlation between attending Mass and community extension ( $r = 0.641$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) aligns with Aksoy et al. (2024), who demonstrated that frequent participation in religious services strengthens community engagement and volunteering by fostering social bonds and civic responsibility.

Furthermore, the relationship between retreat and community extension ( $r = 0.560$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) further supports this finding, as retreat experiences provide opportunities for reflection and value formation that deepen students' sense of purpose and social responsibility. In addition, the donation drive component also exhibits significant relationships with religious practices. For instance, the correlation between recollection and donation drive ( $r = 0.566$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) suggests that students who reflect on religious values are more inclined to participate in charitable activities. This finding is supported by the study of Xie et al. (2020), who explained that religious belief strengthens moral responsibility toward individuals in need and influences charitable behavior. Similarly, the relationship between attending Mass and a donation drive ( $r = 0.625$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) aligns with the idea that religious teachings encourage generosity and helping behaviors, thereby reinforcing students' willingness to contribute to donation programs. Moreover, the correlation between retreat and donation drive ( $r = 0.469$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , highly significant) further supports this interpretation, as retreat experiences foster reflection and value formation that may motivate students to engage in charitable activities. Overall, these results are consistent with Liyanapathirana and Akroyd (2023), who found that youth involved in religious communities demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behavior because religious principles guide actions that benefit society.

#### 4. Conclusions

The following conclusion was drawn from the study's findings: students were moderately active in religious practices. They participated in recollection activities, attended masses, and joined retreats, making religious activities a regular part of their school life. Among these, attending Mass was the most common practice. The analysis revealed that students were also moderately involved in service activities. Their participation in community extension programs and donation drives reflected their willingness to help others when given the opportunity. The study demonstrated a connection between religious practices and service engagement. Students who participated more in religious activities were also more active in helping activities, showing that religious involvement encouraged service to others. Regarding the level of service engagement among students, the evidence identified attending Mass as the religious practice with the strongest influence on students' service engagement. This suggested that regular participation in Mass helped encourage students to take part in community service. Overall, the investigation suggested that religious practices helped shape students' values and encouraged them to care for others. Through recollections, Mass, and retreats, students became more willing to help people in need and participate in service activities. Therefore, the results indicate that religious practices among students of Divine Word College of San Jose significantly influence their engagement in service-related activities. The strong positive relationship indicates that students who are more active in recollections, Mass attendance, and retreats are also more involved in community extension and donation drives. This suggests that religious involvement helps develop their sense of responsibility and willingness to serve others.

**Recommendations** - After collecting data and determining the relationship between religious practices and

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service engagement among Catholic senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose, the following recommendations are made: The school administration may strengthen the connection between religious practices and service activities by organizing follow-up outreach programs after Mass, recollections, and retreats. The Campus Ministry Office may improve retreat activities by adding more interactive and reflective sessions that encourage students to apply what they learn. In addition, the school administration and the Campus Ministry Office may consider conducting retreats twice during the school year, one at the beginning and another at the end, to evaluate students' spiritual growth and service engagement over time. Teachers may also continually remind students that service engagement is an important way to live out their faith. Furthermore, the Student Council and other student organizations may take a more active role in planning and leading community extension and donation drive activities. The school may create regular, consistent service programs to maintain students' high level of participation in community service. Lastly, future researchers may conduct similar studies in other Catholic schools to further understand the relationship between religious practices and service engagement.

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## Social media usage and political awareness of the students

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### **Abstract**

Social media has become a primary source of information among students, especially in shaping their political awareness. Because of this, it is important to understand how social media use affects students' political awareness, as their engagement with digital platforms may shape their understanding of current events, political issues, and democratic participation. This study aimed to determine the effect of social media usage on the political awareness of students at Divine Word College of San Jose. This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design and a validated researcher-made instrument. 67 randomly selected first-year college students participated in this study. The findings revealed that students are frequently exposed to political content, including memes, infographics, short-form videos, and text posts, which significantly influence their political awareness. The results also indicated that while social media increases political awareness, it may also contribute to biased perspectives depending on the type of content viewed. Overall, the findings highlight that social media plays a significant role in shaping students' political views. Thus, teachers may include in their discussions the responsible use of social media, critical thinking, and political awareness. Especially in subjects related to communication, social science, and ethics, this may help students gain a clearer understanding of political memes, infographics, short videos, and text posts before forming their own opinions. This study recommends that the guidance and counseling office implement programs that promote respectful discussion, responsible use of digital media, and awareness of misinformation and online division of opinion. Since social media significantly influences students' political views, these programs may help maintain orderly, positive discourse.

**Keywords:** social media, political views, political memes, social media usage, political awareness

## Social media usage and political awareness of the students

### 1. Introduction

Day by day, social media continues to evolve. It became a key part of everyday life, especially for students. According to Lenhart (2015), 92% of teenagers (ages 13 to 17) go online every day, with 24% reporting that they are online almost constantly. Furthermore, the rate of social media use by 18–29-year-olds has grown precipitously, from 41% in 2006 to 90% in 2015 (Perrin, 2015). Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok are no longer used only for social interaction and entertainment. They have evolved into powerful tools for spreading information and for politically motivated posts, ranging from news articles and opinion pieces to memes and short-form videos that can influence students' political awareness, sometimes without them even realizing it.

In the Philippines, where social media usage is among the highest in the world, the political influence of digital platforms is especially common. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2024), over 89% of Filipinos are active social media users, and many of them are young adults. This digital engagement is not limited to personal but also political participation. From discussions on governance and policy to viral political scandals, such as ghost flood-control projects and corruption in the Philippines, the social media environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape. In educational institutions such as the Divine Word College of San Jose, as students grow academically and personally, the information and news they receive on social media can significantly shape their political views and opinions, despite the growing interest among young adults in politics and digital media. There remains a lack of localized, context-specific research on how students at specific institutions are exposed to different types of political content through social media. This study seeks to fill that gap by focusing on the students of Divine Word College of San Jose. It aims to investigate how social media influences their political views, which types of content most affect those views, their level of critical awareness, and the extent to which their online experiences shape their political awareness.

**Statement of the problem** - This study aimed to determine the role of social media in the political views and opinions of college students. Thus, specifically, the researchers seek to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of social media usage of the students in terms of memes, infographics, short-form videos, and text posts? (2) What is the level of political awareness of the students in terms of frequency of encountering political content, types of political content viewed, and commonly used platforms for political information? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of social media usage and the political awareness of the students?

**Significance of the study** - This study will explore how social media use affects students' political awareness. Social media is no longer used only for social interaction and entertainment. They became a powerful means of spreading political information through various types of social media content. This study will provide valuable data on the relationship between social media use and students' political awareness. Throughout this study, the following individuals are expected to benefit from the results. First, Students will learn more about how social media can affect their political beliefs and opinions, particularly young adults. As a result, they will become more conscious of what they see and share online. Second, teachers will be able to observe how social media influences their students' political thinking. This can assist them in teaching students to think critically and verify information before accepting or disseminating it. Third, parents will be able to see how social media is influencing their children's political views. They can teach their children the value of social media responsibility and, as a result, improve their communication with them. Finally, future researchers can use this study as a useful reference for those interested in studying the effects of social media on teenagers. It also gives them ideas for improving or expanding the research in the future.

**Scope and delimitation of the study** - This study aimed to determine the role of social media use in students'

political awareness at Divine Word College of San Jose. The respondents in this study were 1st-year college students at Divine Word College of San Jose. The researchers used quantitative methods, including distributing survey questionnaires to students at Divine Word College of San Jose. All the answers and ideas shared by the respondents served as an important basis for the study. This study was conducted for the 2025-2026 school year. Within the allotted time, the researchers performed the necessary procedures and sought answers while conducting the study. The given specifications guided the researchers in determining the appropriate sampling and methodology, which produced the study's outcomes. This study is limited to senior high school students who use social media for political news.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - The study used a descriptive-correlational research design. According to Cohen et al. (2018), a descriptive correlational design allows researchers to analyze relationships among variables as they naturally occur. Researchers used this design to fulfill its purpose and achieve its primary objectives. This approach enables the researchers to provide a comprehensive description of the subject without manipulating any variables, and to analyze potential relationships between variables to determine whether they are connected. This methodology supports the accurate assessment of how social media use influences students' political awareness through structured, systematic data collection. Thus, to describe the level of social media usage and political awareness, a descriptive design was employed. Moreover, a correlational design was used to determine if there is a significant relationship between the two variables.

**Respondents of the Study** - The first-year (1<sup>st</sup>) college students at the Divine Word College of San Jose served as the respondents of this study. A simple random sampling technique was used to collect data from 67 students across three courses: BSHM, BSIT, and BSA.

**Research Instrument** - The main tool used in this study was a researcher-made survey questionnaire. It was designed to determine how social media use affects students' political awareness. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part covers social media usage, including memes, infographics, short-form videos, and text posts, with 5 items per variable. The second part consists of 5 items on political awareness, including the frequency of encountering political content, the types of political content viewed, and the platforms most commonly used for political information. Furthermore, to assess the instrument's validity and reliability, expert validation was conducted. The three experts came from the senior high school department holding the research subject. They were assessed to determine whether the questionnaire's content is relevant to the research objectives. Comments and suggestions were incorporated for the final copy of the instrument. Moreover, the 4-point Likert scale in this study was the level of agreement (4- Strongly Agree, 3- Agree, 2- Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree).

**Data Gathering Procedure** - A request letter, signed by the research adviser, was sent to the academic coordinator to seek approval to conduct the study. Moreover, to collect data on the effect of social media use on students' political awareness, the researchers present a consent letter to respondents requesting their voluntary participation. The data were collected by the researchers over one week through a face-to-face survey.

**Statistical Treatment of Data** - Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to treat the collected data. For descriptive statistics, the weighted mean was used to describe the levels of social media usage and political awareness. Moreover, for inferential statistics, Pearson's  $r$  (moment correlation coefficient) was used to assess the relationship between two variables.

**Ethical Consideration** - This study was conducted in line with the following ethical considerations: First, with voluntary participation: The respondents joined the study willingly and were free to withdraw at any time without facing any consequence. Second, informed consent: Before answering, each respondent was informed of the study's purpose and procedures and agreed to take part after fully understanding them. Third, confidentiality: All personal information and responses were private and used only for academic purposes. No names or identifying details were revealed. Lastly, potential harm: The researchers ensured that no physical, emotional, or psychological

harm would occur during the study.

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Social Media Usage in terms of Memes, Infographics, Short-Form Videos, and Text Posts*

No.	Indicators (Memes)	Weighted Mean	Description
1	I often encounter political memes on my social media feed.	3.34	Very High
2	Political memes influence how I think about political issues.	2.82	High
3	I share political memes when I agree with their message.	2.77	High
4	I find political memes entertaining, even if they are about serious issues.	2.66	High
5	Memes make politics easier for me to understand.	2.72	High
	Composite Mean	2.76	High
No.	Indicators (Infographics)		
1	Political infographics help us better understand political issues.	3.21	High
2	I usually trust the information I see in political infographics.	2.91	High
3	Infographics make me pay more attention to political issues.	2.96	High
4	I share infographics about politics on social media.	2.55	High
5	Infographics affect my opinions about political leaders.	2.96	High
	Composite Mean	2.92	High
No.	Indicators (Short-Form Videos)		
1	I watch short-form videos about politics on social media.	3.21	High
2	Short videos influence how I view political issues.	2.93	High
3	I trust political information presented in short videos.	2.48	Low
4	I discuss political topics with friends after watching short-form videos.	2.66	High
5	Short videos increase my interest in political issues.	2.99	High
	Composite Mean	2.85	High
No.	Indicators (Text Posts)		
1	I read political text posts on social media.	3.13	High
2	Text posts influence my opinions about political issues.	2.85	High
3	I prefer reading text-based political content over videos or memes.	2.85	High
4	I share or comment on political text posts that interest me.	2.36	Low
5	Text posts help me form my own political views.	2.91	High
	Composite Mean	2.82	High
	OVERALL MEAN	2.84	High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 1 presents the mean levels of social media usage for memes, infographics, short-form videos, and text posts, with an overall mean of 2.84, interpreted as high. This shows that social media is now a common setting in which respondents regularly engage with a variety of media forms, rather than merely a tool for sporadic communication. Moreover, the overall composite mean score of 2.76, interpreted as high, indicates that political memes were an integral part of students' exposure to political content. The highest-rated item, "I often encountered political memes on my social media feed," has a weighted mean of 3.34, which is interpreted as very high, indicating that students were frequently exposed to political memes in their everyday social media use. This study was supported by Saad & Verma (2021), who found that political memes were highly noticeable and consumed by youth users on digital platforms. The lowest-rated item, "I found political memes entertaining, even if they were about serious issues," had a weighted mean of 2.66 and was still in the high range, indicating that students continued to engage with political memes regularly. The other items, ranging from 2.72 to 2.82, also fell in the high range, showing that students viewed political memes as an important source of information for understanding political issues. These results aligned with the research of Sarwar and Younus (2024), which showed that exposure to political memes improved students' political awareness, increased their involvement, and aided the development of their political beliefs. The study by Moskovljevic (2024) further indicated that frequent exposure to political memes could increase political intolerance, especially when shared by weak social ties. Overall, the data suggest that political memes serve as an accessible, engaging medium for encountering political information, enhancing awareness and engagement while potentially contributing to polarization, depending on exposure patterns and social networks.

Furthermore, the composite mean score of 2.92, interpreted as high, indicated that infographics were generally considered helpful for understanding political content. The highest-rated item, "Political infographics help me

understand political issues better,” has a weighted mean of 3.21, interpreted as high, indicating that students found infographics useful for improving their comprehension of political issues. The lowest-rated item, “I share infographics about politics on social media,” had a weighted mean of 2.55 and was still in the high range, suggesting that although students valued infographics, they were less likely to share them. The other items, ranging from 2.91 to 2.96, also fell in the high range, indicating that students generally trusted and paid attention to the information presented in political infographics. These findings were supported by Lazard and Atkinson (2015), who found that infographics help people understand and process information more effectively, as visuals combined with short text improve clarity. Similarly, Borkin et al. (2016) reported that infographics, such as graphical layouts, help people remember information better than plain text. Moreover, in his study (2017), Ojo noted that designed visual communication materials on social media increase engagement and clarity. Overall, these results suggested that political infographics enhanced students’ understanding and awareness of political issues, even if they did not always share them.

In addition, the composite mean score of 2.85, interpreted as high, suggests that students generally engage with political videos and consider them a source of information. Among the indicators, the item “I watch short-form videos about politics on social media” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.21, which also falls under the high interpretation. The result implies that many students regularly view political content through short videos on social media platforms. This finding is consistent with Bode's (2016) study, which found that exposure to political content on social media can enhance users’ learning and engagement, making them more aware of current issues. On the other hand, the item “I trust political information presented in short videos” received the lowest weighted mean of 2.48 and was interpreted as low. This indicates that although students watch such content, they remain cautious about fully trusting the information presented in these videos. The remaining items, with weighted means ranging from 2.66 to 2.99, were all interpreted as high. These results suggest that watching short political videos encourages students to discuss political topics with their peers and increases their interest in political matters. These findings are supported by Omar and Dequan (2020), who emphasized that short, visually engaging videos are effective in capturing users’ attention and encouraging interaction on social media platforms. Likewise, Vraga and Bode (2017) found that exposure to political content on social media can shape users’ perceptions and awareness of political issues. Overall, the results indicate that short-form political videos are widely viewed and can help raise political awareness among students. However, they remain careful when evaluating the credibility of the information presented.

Lastly, the composite mean is 2.82, which is interpreted as high, indicating that text-based political posts contribute to students’ understanding of political issues and viewpoints. Among the questions, the statement “I read political text posts on social media” received the highest weighted mean of 3.1,3 interpreted as high. This result shows that students frequently read political information shared through text posts on social media platforms. In contrast, the statement “I share or comment on political text posts that interest me” received the lowest weighted mean of 2.36 and was interpreted as low. This suggests that although students read political text posts, they are less likely to interact with them by actively sharing or commenting. The other indicators, with weighted means ranging from 2.85 to 2.91, were interpreted as high, indicating that text posts continue to influence students’ thinking and help them form their own political opinions. These results support the study by Kim et al. (2015), which found that reading political information on social media can increase political knowledge and foster opinion development, even when users do not actively participate by posting or commenting. Overall, the findings suggest that political text posts remain a useful source of information for students and help shape their understanding of political issues.

Table 5 illustrates how often students encountered political content on social media. The overall composite mean score of 3.29, interpreted as very high, indicated that students were frequently exposed to political content while using social media. The highest-rated item, “I encounter political content while scrolling on social media,” received a weighted mean of 3.43 and was interpreted as very high, indicating that students regularly encountered political content as part of their normal social media activity. The lowest-rated item, “I come across political discussions or debates on social media,” has a weighted mean of 3.19, which is interpreted as high, indicating that

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such discussions were slightly less frequent but still common. The other items, ranging from 3.22 to 3.34, also fell in the high to very high range, suggesting that students frequently saw posts about political leaders, government issues, or content shared by friends and followers. These findings were consistent with those of the Pew Research Center (2022), which reported that many young adults frequently encountered content on social media even without actively seeking it. Similarly, Benkler et al. (2018) explained that digital media environments make political information highly visible and easily distributed across networks, while Lewis et al. (2015) noted that social media platforms expose users to news and information as part of their everyday browsing experience. Overall, these results suggested that students were regularly exposed to political content on social media, which may increase awareness of issues and gradually shape their views even through passive exposure.

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of Political Awareness in terms of Frequency of Encountering Political Content, Types of Political Content Viewed, and Commonly Used Platforms for Political Information*

No.	Indicators (Political Content)	Weighted Mean	Description
1	I encounter political content while scrolling on social media.	3.43	Very High
2	Political posts appear on my social media feed even when I am not searching for them.	3.22	High
3	I come across political discussions or debates on social media.	3.19	High
4	I see posts about political leaders or government issues on social media.	3.27	Very High
5	I encounter political content shared by my friends or followers.	3.34	Very High
	Composite Mean	3.29	Very High
No.	Indicators (Types of Political Content Viewed)		
1	I view political memes on social media.	3.21	High
2	I watch short-form political videos (e.g., TikTok, Reels, and Shorts).	3.16	High
3	I read political text posts or status updates.	3.15	High
4	I view political infographics or informational images.	3.18	High
5	I watch live or recorded political discussions or interviews.	3.05	High
	Composite Mean	3.16	High
No.	Indicators (Commonly Used Platforms for Political Information)		
1	I use Facebook as a source of political news and information.	3.13	High
2	I use TikTok to view political content.	3.04	High
3	I use YouTube to watch political discussions, news, or analyses.	3.15	High
4	I use Instagram to access political posts, stories, or reels.	2.78	High
5	I use Twitter/X to follow political updates and public discussions.	2.63	High
	Composite Mean	2.95	High
	OVERALL MEAN	3.13	High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Across the different types of political content on social media, the overall mean was 3.16, which is high. This means students often encounter political information on social media. In other words, political content happens frequently in their feeds and online spaces. The statement with the highest rating was “I view political memes on social media,” which had a mean of 3.21, also considered high. This indicates that memes are the most common type of political content students see. This is not surprising because memes spread quickly online and are generally simple, visual, and easy to understand. Many students likely encounter them casually through social media.

On the other hand, the statement “I watch live or recorded political discussions or interviews” had the lowest mean, 3.05, though it is still considered high. This suggests students still engage with this kind of political content, but less than with memes. Students tend to prefer shorter and more visually appealing content, such as memes or short videos. The other items had means ranging from 3.15 to 3.18, which also fall into the high category. This shows that students often see other forms of political content, such as short videos, text posts, and infographics. These types of content likely make political information easier to understand, especially on platforms where people prefer quick, visual content, according to Bradshaw and Howard (2018). They explained that political information spreads more effectively when presented in various digital formats, such as images and videos. These formats make political messages more visible and help them reach a wider audience. Similarly, Ryabchenko et al. (2019) stated that digital technologies, including hashtags and memes, shape how political ideas are communicated and interpreted online.



users content based on their interests. The significant relationship between social media content and students' political awareness suggests that constant exposure to political information online can shape students' understanding of current political issues. As students continue to encounter and engage with political content on social media, their awareness and views of politics may gradually develop. As students see different types of content such as infographics, videos, text posts, and memes, their opinions and beliefs about politics may gradually develop through continuous exposure to these materials. Moreover, the study by Hassan et al. (2024) found that social media is an important platform for sharing political information and shaping public opinion. This explains that different types of content can influence audiences in different ways, especially on digital platforms, where visual and engaging content tends to be more effective. The results of infographics strongly suggest that clear, concise visual presentations of information can help people better understand political topics. Similarly, the significant effects of short-form videos, text posts, and memes indicate that modern digital content shapes students' political awareness. Overall, the results show that social media is a powerful tool in political communication and can influence how students form their political understanding.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusion was drawn: First, students were frequently exposed to political memes in their everyday social media use. Political infographics enhanced students' understanding and awareness of political issues, even if they did not always share them. Short-form political videos are widely viewed and can help raise political awareness among students, although they remain cautious when evaluating the credibility of the information presented. Thus, the level of political content viewed by college students is evident across different formats such as memes, infographics, short-form videos, and text posts. Third, regarding exposure to political content on social media, students frequently encounter political posts on their most-used platforms. Lastly, there is a significant relationship between the frequency of social media use and college students' level of political awareness.

**Recommendation** - The following recommendations are based on the study's findings and conclusions. First, the DWCSJ Administration may adopt and implement a more comprehensive media and information literacy program for students. Since the study showed that frequent exposure to political content significantly influences students' views and opinions, the school may conduct seminars, training sessions, and other educational activities to develop students' ability to analyze and verify political information on social media. Second, teachers and instructors may include discussions of the responsible use of social media, critical thinking, and political awareness. Especially in subjects related to communication, social science, and ethics, this may help students gain a clearer understanding of political memes, infographics, short videos, and text posts before forming their own opinions. Third, the Student Affairs Office may organize debates, symposiums, and open forums on current political issues. Since most students are merely receivers of information and not actively involved, these activities may help encourage responsible, respectful, and informed participation in political affairs. Fourth, student organizations may take the lead in promoting fact-checking and responsible sharing of political information on commonly used platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. Student organizations may take the lead. Create content that helps fellow students see all sides of political issues and improve their understanding. Fifth, the Guidance and Counseling Office may implement programs that promote respectful discussion, responsible use of digital media, and awareness against misinformation and online division of opinion. Since social media significantly influences students' political views, these programs may help maintain orderly, positive discourse. Lastly, future researchers may conduct further studies on other factors that may affect students' political views, such as the influence of family, friends, and traditional media. They may also expand the scope of the study to other years of study or to other institutions to provide comparisons and further deepen existing knowledge on this topic.

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## Social media validation and its effect on the self-esteem of senior high school students

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### **Abstract**

Many adolescents today constantly use social media due to the rise of technology and the internet. As a result, many adolescents, particularly SHS students, use social media to seek validation from others. This study aimed to determine if social media validation affects the self-esteem of SHS students. This study employed a descriptive-correlational design to describe the levels of social media validation and self-esteem among students and to examine the relationship between these variables. The researchers used a 35-item researcher-developed questionnaire to collect data. The findings showed that the SHS students relied more on comments and shares for social media validation than on likes and followers. Additionally, students generally had high levels of self-esteem in academic, social, and physical domains. The results show that students highly value direct, positive feedback, such as likes, viewing it as a meaningful sign of recognition and social interaction. Overall, the results show that social media validation significantly affects SHS students' self-esteem. Thus, this study recommends that teachers integrate discussions of digital literacy and responsible social media use into classroom activities to help students understand that followers should not determine their confidence. School administrations may implement awareness programs that promote balanced social media use so students do not base their worth on online engagement, such as shares. It is also recommended that SHS students and other adolescents promote and develop healthier social media habits and avoid overreliance on social media validation, with support from mentors, friends, and family.

**Keywords:** self-esteem, social media, validation, senior high school, technology

## **Social media validation and its effect on the self-esteem of senior high school students**

### **1. Introduction**

In the United States, 95% of adolescents aged 13 to 17 reported using social media, with over one-third saying they use it “almost constantly” (Office of the Surgeon General, 2023). In the Philippines, social media has become a major part of daily life, especially among adolescents and senior high school students, and the country is even dubbed the “social media capital of the world.” According to Dhingra and Parashar (2022), adolescents and senior high school students are part of a technologically advanced society and learn at an early age to deal with the challenges of the virtual world. With the rapid rise of social media as spaces for connection, many adolescents and students use these platforms to seek validation from others in the form of likes, comments, shares, and followers. Many of them view these engagements as reflections of popularity, self-worth, and self-esteem, and consider them an important part of their social media experience.

At first glance, this phenomenon may not seem significant, given that the need for validation plays a crucial role during adolescence because it boosts self-esteem. Comparing oneself to others and the need for belonging have always been timeless human practices. Adolescence is a crucial transitional phase in life where physical, emotional, and psychological changes occur. In this stage of rapid growth, validation for children and adolescents is essential to their social, emotional, and physical development. Self-esteem also plays a vital role during this transitional period. In this study, self-esteem was examined from three major areas: physical, social, and academic. Physical self-esteem refers to how adolescents perceive and value their body image and physical appearance; social self-esteem involves their sense of belonging and acceptance among peers and in relationships; and academic self-esteem pertains to their perception of intellectual abilities and academic performance. Each of these areas can be influenced by external feedback and validation, such as that received from social media. However, factors such as social comparison may also result in decreased self-esteem.

Studies have consistently shown a strong relationship between social media use and self-esteem. For instance, Jan et al. (2017) reported that approximately 88% of individuals engaged in social comparisons, with 98% of these comparisons being upward, meaning people often compared themselves with others they perceived as better. Similarly, Vogel et al. (2014) found that frequent Facebook users tended to compare themselves to individuals they viewed as superior, which contributed to lower self-esteem. Moreover, a study by Carballo et al. (2024) involving senior high school students in Davao City revealed that overall social media usage was significantly correlated with students’ perceived body image. Although the students generally reported high self-esteem, they also had difficulty responding to criticism and expressed concerns about body-modification preferences. Taken together, these findings highlight how social media exposure influences adolescents’ self-perception and emotional well-being.

This study, therefore, examines how social media validation influences Senior High School students at Divine Word College of San Jose. In today’s increasingly digital and technological society, adolescents are highly exposed to online platforms where validation often comes in the form of likes, comments, shares, and followers. These indicators of approval can shape how young people view themselves and others, influencing their emotions, self-esteem, and confidence. By examining this phenomenon, the study aims to provide meaningful insights into the emotional well-being of students from DWCSJ in relation to social media validation. Specifically, it aims to determine whether online indicators such as likes, comments, shares, and followers serve as encouragement that enhances self-confidence and promotes a healthy self-image, or whether they contribute to reliance, social pressure, and potential negative effects such as insecurity and reduced self-worth. Despite the growing relevance of this topic, limited research and available data exist focusing on the DWCSJ Senior High School student population, highlighting a clear research gap that this study seeks to address. The findings of this study may contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of social media validation in adolescent development and offer implications for

promoting media literacy, resilience, and healthier online practices within the DWCSJ school community.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the effect of social media validation on the self-esteem of Senior High School students. It sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of social media validation experienced by SHS students in terms of likes, comments, followers, and shares? (2) What is the level of self-esteem of SHS students in terms of academics, social life, and physical appearance? (3) Is there a significant relationship between social media validation and the self-esteem of SHS students?

**Significance of the Study** - This research will explore how social media validation affects the self-esteem of Senior High School students. As social media remains a major influence in adolescent lives, this study will provide essential insights into its psychological effects. The findings of this study will offer valuable insights to inform strategies, programs, and policies that support students' emotional well-being and promote healthier social media use. The following individuals and groups are expected to benefit from the results of this study. Firstly, this study may help students understand how social media affects their self-esteem and guide them in developing healthier online habits. It will empower them to build confidence independently of social media and prioritize their mental well-being. This research may also help parents recognize the effects of social media on their children's self-esteem and mental health. It will equip them to set healthy boundaries, foster open communication, and build a positive self-image at home. It may also help inform teachers about social media's effect on students' self-esteem and mental health. It may help them create supportive classrooms, integrate digital literacy, and promote healthy online behavior. Additionally, this study may provide counselors with insights into how social media validation affects students' self-esteem. It may help them design programs and interventions that promote healthier coping and self-worth beyond social media. Lastly, this study may serve as a foundation for future research on social media and self-esteem. It can guide further studies on effective interventions and the long-term effects of social media on adolescents' self-image.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - The primary objective of this study was to figure out the effects of social media validation on the self-esteem of SHS students, specifically those from Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ) enrolled during the academic year 2025-2026. It specifically sought to determine whether social media validation affects Divine Word College of San Jose SHS students, and, if so, to what extent. Additionally, it aimed to understand how students' self-esteem is affected by the quantity, type, and perceived value of validation (likes, comments, shares, and followers) they receive on social media platforms. The targeted population and demographic were SHS students from Divine Word College of San Jose in Occidental Mindoro who were active users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The researchers gathered data through surveys, and self-esteem was measured using a researcher-developed 35-item questionnaire divided into 2 parts. Students from the CDC/GS, JHS, and college departments were not included. The researchers also primarily focused on the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, as prior observations indicated these were the most commonly used by the students. Additionally, other factors that may influence students' self-esteem, such as family circumstances, academic performance, and in-person relationships, were not addressed in this study. The data gathered relied solely on survey responses, which may have been affected by the respondents' honesty, mood, and willingness to participate during data collection.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, a non-experimental quantitative approach used to describe variable characteristics and examine naturally occurring relationships between them without manipulating the variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, a descriptive design was used to describe the levels of religious practices and service engagement. Moreover, a correlational design was used to determine the significant relationship between the two variables.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of this study were the senior high school students at DWCSJ who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The researchers randomly

selected 17 students per section; thus, across 12 sections, the respondents were equal to 204.

**Research Instrument** - The primary research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 35 items and two main parts. The primary research instrument used in this study is a structured survey questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire comprises two main parts designed to measure social media validation and self-esteem among Senior High School students. The first part was a Social Media Validation Scale, which measured the level of validation students receive on social media platforms in terms of likes, comments, followers, and shares, as identified in related literature as key indicators of social media validation. This section consisted of five (5) items per indicator, for a total of twenty (20) items. All items were measured using a 4-point Likert Scale. The second part was a Self-Esteem Scale that measured students' self-esteem in academic, social, and physical domains, consistent with the Statement of the Problem. This section consisted of four (4) statements, also measured using the same 4-point Likert Scale. The data gathered from the questionnaire were used to determine the level of social media validation, the respondents' self-esteem, and the significant relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, expert validation was used to determine the validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaire. The three experts came from same department who teaches the research subject.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - Before beginning data-gathering procedures, the researchers secured consent from their research advisor. After approval, the selected participants received informed consent documents that explained all aspects of the study, including its purpose, scope, and confidentiality measures. Once consent was obtained, the researchers distributed survey questionnaires to Senior High School students who actively use Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok and have provided consent to participate in the study. The questionnaires assessed the effect of social media validation on participants' self-esteem. The researchers distributed the validated questionnaires and retrieved them from the respondents face-to-face as the sole method for data collection. The data collection process was conducted within a week. The researchers verified all questionnaires for completeness and accuracy before statistical analysis. All gathered data were kept confidential, and participants experienced no distress or pressure during the research process.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - In this study, the following statistical tools were used to analyze the data gathered from respondents. The levels of social media validation and self-esteem were measured using weighted mean analysis. Additionally, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to assess whether a significant relationship existed between self-esteem and social media validation.

**Ethical Considerations** - This study adhered to ethical standards when conducting research with human participants. Before collecting data, the researchers secured approval from their research advisor. Respondents were informed about the purpose and process of the study and that participation was voluntary. They were also informed that they could stop answering or withdraw at any time without any problems or consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents were strictly maintained. No identifying information was disclosed, and all gathered data were used for academic purposes. The researchers ensured that all responses were treated with respect and stored securely to protect participants' privacy.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Social Media Validation in terms of Likes, Comments, Followers, and Shares*

No.	Indicators (Likes)	Weighted Mean	Description
1	I feel better about myself when my posts receive many likes.	3.25	High
2	The number of likes I get affects my mood	2.32	Low
3	I usually keep track of the likes on my posts.	2.50	Low
4	I feel discouraged when the number of likes is lower than I expected.	2.27	Low
5	I compare my likes with those of my peers.	2.00	Low
	Composite Mean	2.47	Low

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No.	Indicators (Comments)		
1	Positive comments make me feel valued as a person.	3.38	Very High
2	I reread comments to reassure myself about how others see me.	2.86	High
3	I pay more attention to comments than to likes.	2.51	High
4	Negative comments make me question my worth.	2.46	Low
5	Encouraging comments make me feel appreciated.	3.26	Very High
	Composite Mean	2.89	High
No.	Indicators (Followers)		
1	Having many followers makes me feel important.	2.50	Low
2	I gain confidence when someone new follows me.	2.77	High
3	I sometimes judge my popularity by my follower count.	2.19	Low
4	I compare my number of followers with that of others.	2.07	Low
5	Getting new followers motivates me to post more.	3.43	Low
	Composite Mean	2.39	Low
No.	Indicators (Shares)		
1	When others share my posts, I feel recognized.	2.99	High
2	A post being shared makes me think my ideas are worth something.	3.06	High
3	I feel proud when someone shares my content.	3.04	High
4	I sometimes create posts to encourage more people to share them.	2.30	Low
5	More shares on my posts make me feel more confident.	2.72	High
	Composite Mean	2.82	High
	OVERALL MEAN	2.65	High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 1 presents the mean levels of social media validation in terms of likes, comments, followers, and shares, with an overall mean of 2.65, which is interpreted as high. This indicates that although this validation is more closely linked to qualitative interactions (comments and shares) than to quantitative metrics (follower counts or sheer like counts), respondents typically derive a sense of personal value and social recognition from digital engagement. Moreover, the mean level of social media validation, measured by likes, was 2.47, which falls in the low range. This indicates that students generally do not rely heavily on the number of likes they receive to assess their self-worth. For them, likes are often seen as a normal part of using the platform, something that happens whenever a post is uploaded rather than a meaningful measure of approval or acceptance. These results suggest that students treat likes as routine digital responses rather than as significant indicators of recognition, reflecting a more balanced approach to social media interactions. The statement “I feel better about myself when my posts get a lot of likes” has the highest mean, 3.25, which falls in the high category. Even though students do not depend on likes overall, receiving many likes can still positively affect mood, making them feel noticed or valued for a short time. This suggests that likes may provide a transient enhancement in confidence without influencing enduring self-esteem. It seems that online interactions make students happy for a short time. However, they still have a sense of self-worth grounded in their own experiences, relationships, and successes outside social media. The statement "I compare my likes with those of my peers" has the lowest mean, 2.00, indicating that most students do not compare the likes on their posts to those of their peers'. This means it is a more beneficial approach to using social media, as they are less likely to base their self-esteem on their peers' engagement rates. Students will not doubt themselves if they do not use likes to compare themselves to other people. They also have a stronger and more stable sense of self-worth that does not really depend on getting likes on social media.

Previous studies supported the results. Zhu et al. (2024) showed that a larger amount of likes satisfies the desire for social acceptance, especially when online content aligns with users' ideal self-concept. Similarly, Reich et al. (2017) stated that likes can satisfy psychological needs such as belongingness and self-esteem, which is why they are often viewed as signs of social validation. The finding that students rarely compare their personal preferences with those of others supported Jan et al. (2017) and Krause et al. (2019), who showed that teenagers respond differently to online social comparison depending on individual differences. These findings also aligned with the “looking-glass self” theory, which posits that individuals construct their self-image based on their perceptions of how others think (Rao & Kumar, 2020). The results showed that getting likes had a positive effect on students' self-esteem and emotional health. However, they did not completely determine how much students valued themselves.

Furthermore, regarding comments, the composite mean of 2.89 is considered high. This also shows that the students usually think that comments are a very important way to get social validation. Comments give students direct, opinionated feedback, which they might find more useful and meaningful than likes, which really do not require any action. The statement with the highest mean (3.38) indicates that positive comments do make students feel better about themselves. “Positive comments make me feel valued as a person.” Such interactions may improve feelings of belonging, underscoring the significance of meaningful communication in influencing emotional responses on social media. The lowest mean of 2.46 was recorded for the statement “Negative comments make me question my worth.” Such as interactions that may improve feelings of belonging, focusing on the importance of communicating in ways that affect how people feel on social media. In general, comments seem to be a stronger way to validate someone socially than likes. They give students both positive feedback and opportunities to maintain their confidence, even when they receive criticism. Previous research also supports these findings, with Pamisa et al. (2025) reporting that positive comments increase resilience and self-worth, whereas negative comments decrease self-esteem. Similarly, Zulfianti et al. (2024) discovered that the frequency and the positivity of online comments are associated with higher self-esteem, supporting the hypothesis that interactive online feedback fosters social relationships and identity. The weaker influence of negative comments was consistent with Midgley et al. (2020), who explained that personal traits and coping strategies can lessen the impact of criticism. The findings show that positive comments had a greater impact on students than negative ones, particularly on emotional well-being and self-esteem. This highlighted the need for healthy online interactions and for students to learn how to deal with criticism on social media.

In terms of followers, the composite mean is 2.39, which is considered low. Most students do not think that having a lot of followers is a good way to feel good about themselves. It seems that follower counts do not boost self-esteem as much as comments and shares do. The results show that students do not use the number of people who like them to judge their social acceptance. The highest mean, 2.77 (in the high range), was for getting a new follower. This shows that gaining new followers can give you a short boost in confidence, but it is not very strong. It seems that students care more about personal interactions and meaningful engagement than just getting more followers. This suggests that online recognition is more emotionally reinforced by active participation than by numbers. Comparing their number of followers with those of peers had the lowest mean (2.07), placing it in the low category. This suggests that students rarely engage in social comparison based on follower counts. As a result, they are unlikely to feel pressure or insecurity from online popularity metrics, supporting a healthier and more balanced approach to social media use. The findings, however, are contradicted by previous studies. A systematic examination by Woods (2023) showed that follower counts may influence how individuals view themselves by serving as a form of social approval, contradicting the findings. Moreover, Sciara et al. (2021) found that when individuals with a strong demand for social validation and approval gain substantial amounts of followers on social media platforms like Instagram, they experience positive emotions, whilst having fewer followers led to unpleasant feelings and less motivation to attract attention on the internet, suggesting that changes in the number of followers might have a greater effect on teenagers who actively seek validation. Additionally, Serra and Campaniço (2024) observed that Instagram users' self-esteem and life satisfaction are influenced by their total follower counts. This indicates that although people generally value followers, the students' focus on meaningful interactions rather than mere numbers supports healthier social media practices.

Lastly, in terms of shares, the overall composite mean of 2.82 is interpreted as high. Most students think that sharing things on social media is a good way to get attention. Shares, on the other hand, require a deliberate decision to repost or share the content with others. It is easy and quick to give likes. This is why students often think that shares are a better sign that their content is liked and worth sharing. The statement “A post being shared makes me think my ideas are worth something” got the highest mean of 3.06, which also falls under the high level. This suggests that students associate being shared with personal validation. When people share their posts, they feel like others are listening to their ideas, opinions, or creativity. For them, sharing means more than just saying something on social media. The statement “I sometimes create posts so that many people will share them” had the lowest mean, 2.30, indicating low agreement. This results in most of the students not making content just to get

people to share it. Their answers show they do not really want to involve more people. They seem to post more to share their thoughts than to get likes, which shows that they use social media in a more balanced way. These results suggest that social media validation through shares is positively correlated with students' self-esteem and confidence. Supporting this, Ballara (2023) noted that social validation affects self-esteem and identity as individuals adjust their behavior to feel included. Similarly, Youssef (2025) reported that teens who are more active online tend to have higher self-esteem, whereas less active teens tend to have lower self-esteem. However, Hjetland et al. (2024) cautioned that an excessive focus on online feedback can negatively affect mental health and self-esteem, highlighting the importance of balancing online engagement with other sources of personal validation.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Self-Esteem in terms of Academic, Social, and Physical*

No.	Indicators (Academic)	Weighted Mean	Description
1	I believe I can handle my schoolwork well.	3.28	Very High
2	I feel proud of what I accomplish in class.	3.37	Very High
3	I am confident when I participate in lessons.	3.23	High
4	I feel capable of handling my academic responsibilities.	3.25	High
5	I believe I can reach my study goals.	3.30	Very High
	Composite Mean	3.29	Very High
No.	Indicators (Social)		
1	I actively take part in group or class discussions	3.20	High
2	I have classmates I can talk to easily	3.42	Very High
3	I can participate in school activities that involve teamwork	3.32	Very High
4	I feel confident sharing my opinions in front of others.	2.88	High
5	I am comfortable working with others during group activities	3.18	High
	Composite Mean	3.20	High
No.	Indicators (Physical)		
1	I feel satisfied with my overall appearance.	2.91	High
2	I am comfortable with how I look in school	2.96	High
3	I feel okay seeing myself in photos and mirrors	2.95	High
4	I can focus on activities without worrying too much about how I look	3.07	High
5	I feel confident about how I look in my school uniform	2.91	High
	Composite Mean	2.96	High
	OVERALL MEAN	3.15	High

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 2 presents the mean levels of self-esteem across the academic, social, and physical domains, with an overall mean of 3.15, which is interpreted as high. This suggests that respondents have a positive and consistent self-concept across various aspects of their lives. While they have high confidence in their social interactions and physical self-perception, their sense of self-worth is largely based on their academic proficiency and perceived capacity to succeed in an educational setting. Moreover, the mean level of self-esteem in the academic domain among senior high school students was 3.29, considered very high. The results show that students generally believe in their ability to handle schoolwork, accomplish tasks, and reach study goals. For instance, the highest mean of 3.37 for “I feel proud of what I accomplish in class” indicates that many students have a positive self-view and are confident in their academic skills. This suggests that self-esteem motivates them to do schoolwork. Slightly lower means were observed in statements such as “I am confident when I participate in lessons” (3.23) and “I feel capable of handling my academic responsibilities” (3.25), which remain at a high level. This means that even though most students are confident, they could do better at participating in class and doing schoolwork every day. Students seem confident in their abilities, but providing more opportunities to practice and receive support could increase their interest and improve their performance. Previous research supports these findings by highlighting the link between academic self-esteem and student achievement. Zhao et al. (2021) found that students with higher self-esteem are more engaged in their studies, particularly when they receive support from teachers, peers, or family. Similarly, Ogot et al. (2020) and Srewal et al. (2023) reported that students with higher academic self-esteem tend to achieve better academic outcomes. Basith (2021) emphasized that self-esteem affects how students assess their capabilities, even if it does not always directly translate into performance. Together, these studies suggest that strong academic self-esteem can motivate students' engagement and foster positive learning experiences.

Furthermore, in terms of social, the composite mean of 3.20, which falls under the high level. The results show that most students are confident when it comes to socializing, such as working with classmates, talking in groups, and collaborating with others. The mean score of 3.42 for “I have classmates I can talk to easily” indicates that students believe they have strong friendships with their peers and are comfortable asking others for help. These results suggest that students have a good sense of their social worth, which probably makes them more likely to get involved and work together with others. Some statements, such as “I feel confident sharing my opinions in front of others” (2.88), have lower means than others, although they are still high. This shows that students are usually confident in social situations, but they might be less confident when they have to share their opinions or when they are in front of a large audience. In general, students seem to have high social self-esteem, especially in places where support and teamwork are important. This shows how important relationships with other people are for building confidence and comfort in social situations. These findings are supported by previous research on social support and self-esteem. Anda et al. (2025) found that social support significantly predicted psychological well-being among university students, with self-esteem serving as a mediator. Similarly, Yıldırım et al. (2024) and Bum and Jeon (2016) reported that support from peers, instructors, and parents strengthened students’ self-esteem, promoting positive emotional states and overall well-being. The high level of social self-esteem observed among SHS students may indicate that these support systems help, suggesting that students who feel encouraged and guided in their interactions are more confident in social situations, even if they have some doubts in more public or opinion-driven environments.

Lastly, in the physical domain among senior high school students, the composite mean is 2.96, which falls under the high category. The findings show that most students are happy with how they look and feel good about how they look at school. Statements such as “I can focus on activities without worrying too much about how I look” (3.07) and “I am comfortable with how I look in school” (2.96) indicate that students have a good view of their physical appearance, which lets them participate in school activities with confidence without worrying too much about how they look. Although all items fall within the high category, none reach the very high level, suggesting that students generally have a good physical self-image but could still work on building confidence in how they look in some areas. For example, “I feel satisfied with my overall appearance” and “I feel confident about how I look in my school uniform” (both 2.91), suggesting that students generally have a good physical self-image. However, they could still work on building confidence in some areas. Overall, the results show that students have a healthy level of self-esteem about their appearance, allowing them to participate in school and social activities without being overly self-conscious. These findings are consistent with prior research linking physical self-esteem to overall well-being and confidence. According to Harter (2012), adolescents who perceive their physical appearance positively are more likely to exhibit higher overall self-esteem and engage confidently in school and social activities. Similarly, Marsh et al. (2017) noted that positive physical self-perception contributes to emotional resilience and reduces vulnerability to social comparison. These results imply that promoting supportive environments and positive feedback about appearance can reinforce students’ physical self-esteem, foster confidence and well-being, and minimize negative self-perception.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing (H0)*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Social Media Validation (Likes)→ Self-esteem (Academic)	0.247	0.061	1.972	3.623	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation (Comments)→ Self-esteem (Academic)	0.168	0.028	1.972	2.422	0.016	Significant
Social Media Validation (Followers)→ Self-esteem (Academic)	0.278	0.077	1.972	4.113	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation (Shares)→ Self-esteem (Academic)	0.313	0.098	1.972	4.684	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation→ Self-esteem (Academic)	0.294	0.087	1.972	4.372	<0.001	Highly Significant

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Social Media Validation (Likes)→ Self-esteem (Social)	0.302	0.091	1.972	4.503	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation (Comments)→ Self-esteem (Social)	0.305	0.093	1.972	4.552	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation (Followers)→ Self-esteem (Social)	0.280	0.078	1.972	4.145	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation (Shares)→ Self-esteem (Social)	0.342	0.117	1.972	5.173	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation→ Self-esteem (Social)	0.356	0.127	1.972	5.241	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation (Likes)→ Self-esteem (Physical)	0.215	0.046	1.972	3.129	0.002	Significant
Social Media Validation (Comments)→ Self-esteem (Physical)	0.204	0.041	1.972	2.962	0.003	Significant
Social Media Validation (Followers)→ Self-esteem (Physical)	0.184	0.034	1.972	2.661	0.008	Significant
Social Media Validation (Shares)→ Self-esteem (Physical)	0.264	0.069	1.972	3.890	<0.001	Highly Significant
Social Media Validation→ Self-esteem	0.361	0.130	1.972	5.501	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value<0.001 Highly Significant

p-value <0.05 Significant

The correlation coefficients varied from 0.168 to 0.381, with all p-values below 0.05, signifying statistically significant associations. The strongest link was between overall social media validation and overall self-esteem ( $r = 0.361$ ). This implies that students' self-esteem tends to increase with greater social media validation. Social self-esteem showed the strongest correlation with social media validation ( $r = 0.356$ ), indicating that students' confidence in social contexts is more influenced by online validation than by their academic or physical self-esteem. Shares, in particular, showed the strongest association with social self-esteem ( $r = 0.342$ ), suggesting that interactive forms of validation may have a greater effect on students' social confidence.

In contrast, the weakest correlation ( $r = 0.168$ ) was observed between comments and academic self-esteem, indicating a smaller but still important relationship. The significant p-values ( $< 0.05$  and  $< 0.001$ ) support rejecting the null hypothesis. Furthermore, Dhingra and Parashar (2022) examined how adolescents seek validation on social media through sharing photos and stories, linking this behavior to self-esteem boosts via peer approval during a vulnerable developmental phase. Related research highlights social media's role in shaping self-esteem through feedback loops, with adolescents showing heightened sensitivity to likes and comments compared to adults (State Self-Esteem Responses to social media, 2025). Another related study analyzes daily fluctuations in state self-esteem in response to platform interactions, emphasizing social comparison as a key mediator (A comparative study of state self-esteem responses to social media, 2025).

Meanwhile, Rao and Kumar (2020) developed and validated an eight-item Social Media Self-Esteem Scale for 16- to 18-year-olds, grounded in looking-glass self-theory, in which perceived peer responses shape self-views. Supporting literature includes empirical tests of person-specific effects, revealing that 8% of adolescents experience declines in self-esteem associated with social media use, while most show minimal change (Social Media Use and Adolescents' Self-Esteem, 2021). Valkenburg et al. (2020), as an umbrella review, synthesized 25 reviews (2019-2021) on social media's mental health effects, noting weak overall links to self-esteem but highlighting intervening factors like usage patterns and content; related overviews confirm risks such as ill-being from cyberbullying and opportunities like support networks, influenced by demographics and platform design, with lower baseline self-esteem adolescents gaining more from positive feedback (Social media use and its impact on adolescent mental health, 2020).

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were obtained: The students generally showed low reliance

on likes; even those receiving many likes on their posts still experienced increased mood and self-esteem. The results suggest that the students highly value direct and positive feedback, such as from likes, viewing it as a meaningful sign of recognition and social interaction. The results indicate that students generally perceive their content as being shared as an acknowledgment that their ideas or contributions are valued, which increases their self-esteem. The findings indicate that students do not heavily depend on their follower counts to boost self-esteem; however, gaining new followers provides boosts in confidence and positive reinforcement, though its influence is less than that of the other sub-variables. The results found that students generally showed a high level of self-esteem in this regard. In particular, students who show pride in their academic accomplishments may attribute this to high academic self-esteem. The results show that the students also have a high level of social self-esteem, especially in interacting with others, such as their classmates, and can easily talk to them, whether online or in person. The findings indicate that, similar to the other sub-variables in this category, the students also display a high level of physical self-esteem. They can engage freely in school activities without being overly concerned or self-conscious about their physical appearance, indicating a generally positive physical self-perception. The findings suggest a significant correlation between how SHS students portray themselves on social media and their self-esteem. This means that even while online interactions can affect self-esteem, students still have a healthy sense of their value.

**Recommendations** - Based on the study's results and conclusions, the following recommendation is offered: Students may be encouraged to develop healthy social media habits and avoid relying entirely on likes as a measure of self-worth. Parents may give consistent emotional support and guidance to help their children understand that social media validation, including comments, does not define their value and identity. Teachers may blend discussions about digital literacy and responsible social media use in classroom activities to help students understand that followers should not determine their confidence. School administrations may implement awareness programs that promote balanced social media use, so students do not base their worth on online engagement, such as shares. Guidance offices may conduct seminars and workshops to further strengthen students' academic confidence and self-esteem. School administrations may also create programs that help students manage social comparisons and maintain healthy interactions, thereby supporting social self-esteem. School health offices may promote programs that encourage healthy lifestyles and positive body image among students, helping maintain their physical self-esteem and confidence in participating in school activities. Future researchers may conduct further studies that include variables such as family background, peer influence, academic performance, and mental health factors to gain a broader understanding of the relationship between social media validation and self-esteem. persist as students transition into higher education or independent living and may explore additional variables, such as the specific impact of social media trends and digital payment platforms on the impulse control and record-keeping habits of the youth.

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## Awareness of students towards the government's poverty reduction program

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### **Abstract**

Most Filipino families continue to experience poverty, which limits their access to opportunities, particularly in education. In response to this issue, the Philippine government implemented the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a conditional cash transfer program that provides financial assistance and social support to low-income families to improve their living conditions and support their children's education and health. This study examined the awareness of Grade 9 and Grade 10 student beneficiaries at San Jose National High School regarding the program's status. Using a descriptive-correlational design, a total of 167 identified student beneficiaries were selected using stratified sampling. The study found that most student beneficiaries are aware of the objectives, benefits, and processes of the 4Ps program. The respondents showed a clear understanding that the program aims to support their education and help address the financial challenges faced by their families. In terms of the status of the program, the students indicated that the 4Ps significantly helps them continue their studies and meet some of their daily educational needs. Moreover, the results showed a strong positive correlation between the level of awareness of the students and the status of the government poverty reduction program among the respondents. This means that students who have greater awareness and understanding of the program are more likely to recognize its benefits and implementation. Thus, this study recommends that teachers and curriculum developers incorporate localized case studies from the 4Ps program into Social Science or Araling Panlipunan classes.

**Keywords:** poverty reduction, level of awareness, 4Ps, government program

## Awareness of students towards the government's poverty reduction program

### 1. Introduction

Poverty alleviation is one of the nation's most urgent concerns in the Philippines, where a large percentage of the population remains under the poverty line (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). To combat this, the national government had launched and pursued a very broad array of poverty alleviation programs across diverse sectors, such as the 4Ps and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program. In addition, students' attitudes and knowledge about these government programs had become a priority. As stakeholders in society and potential future implementers and policymakers, students could influence public opinion and keep the programs going. Their perceptions and awareness could provide feedback to refine public participation and anti-poverty operations, enabling them to be better communicated and delivered (Omaweng, 2022). Putting Occidental Mindoro first added another level of priority. The province, especially the town of San Jose, still grappled with socio-economic issues that circumscribed the extent and impact of poverty alleviation programs (Ramirez, 2024). As a growth region spanning rural and semi-urban areas, San Jose exemplified the strengths and weaknesses of national programs in action at the local level.

Apart from these, government anti-poverty programs in most areas are plagued by issues such as inappropriate information delivery, uneven implementation, and low participation from the main community sectors (Hercapacio & Irham, 2023). Problems are even more critical in provinces like Occidental Mindoro, where infrastructure and logistical challenges could sabotage the effective delivery of services. Student beneficiaries are, in most cases, the least considered, even though they could be potential stakeholders and beneficiaries of the program. Low participation and poor awareness among students could lead to ineffective use of available services and poor community support (Ponferrada et al., 2024). Misunderstandings could arise unless people knew about the benefits of programs, access procedures, and official government agencies, leading to myths that could ultimately weaken government efforts and hinder citizens' participation. This presented a significant gap in research: although various evaluations of government programs documented their short-term impacts, few examined students' attitudes toward these programs, especially in disadvantaged communities like San Jose.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the relationship between students' perceptions of the government's poverty-reduction program. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of awareness of students in the government poverty reduction program in terms of socio-economic status, program disability, and cultural background? (2) What is the status of the government poverty reduction program in terms of program benefit, access, and participation processes, and assistance program (4ps, Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program)? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness of students and the status of the government's poverty reduction program?

**Significance of the Study** - This study aims to determine students' level of awareness and perceptions of government poverty-reduction programs in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. Through this research, the respondent will learn how the flow of government programs in poverty reduction will reduce their curiosity. First, the student-respondents would be more aware of and better understand the government's poverty alleviation programs and how they could benefit from them. Moreover, teachers could better understand students' perspectives on poverty and use this understanding to promote social awareness. Additionally, guidance counselors would gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students affected by poverty. Furthermore, the LGUs could better understand students' awareness of these government poverty alleviation programs and possibly improve them. Lastly, other researchers could use this research as a reference for further research on poverty reduction and social welfare programs.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - The study was conducted to assess the perspectives and levels of

awareness of Grade 9 and Grade 10 students at San Jose National High School in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, specifically regarding the government's poverty reduction program, particularly the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, from August 2025 to March 2026. The respondents were selected from different sections of the Junior High School, and a total of 156 students participated in the study. The study's scope was on students' level of awareness and perspectives on the 4Ps in terms of socio-economic status, culture, benefits, processes, and assistance, and on determining students' level of awareness and perceptions of the effectiveness of the government's poverty reduction program. The study's limitation was that it only focused on students from San Jose National High School and did not include students from other schools, parents, teachers, or government officials. Moreover, the study relied solely on survey questionnaires and not on validation from students' interviews and academic records; thus, it was limited to the students who participated in the study.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design. A descriptive design was used to determine the level of awareness and perceptions of Grade 9 and Grade 10 students of San Jose National High School (SJNHS) regarding government poverty-reduction programs. Specifically, it investigated the student's level of awareness of their socio-economic status, disability status, and cultural background, as well as the status of government poverty reduction programs in terms of benefits, access and participation processes, and assistance programs such as 4Ps. Moreover, a correlational design was used to examine the significant relationships among the identified variables. Furthermore, the study analyzed whether there were significant differences in students' perceptions and levels of awareness across levels of awareness, and whether there was a significant relationship between students' level of awareness and their perceptions of the effectiveness of government reduction programs. This study used a quantitative approach to measure and analyze the relationship between these variables objectively.

**Respondents of the Study** - The San Jose National High School has a total of 287 4Ps beneficiaries, comprising 126 in Grade 9 and 161 in Grade 10. The respondents were chosen using stratified sampling in their chosen grade level. The result had a population of 167 beneficiaries using Slovin's formula. However, only 156 beneficiaries participated. Based on Raosoft Calculator with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level (Ellen, 2022), for a population size of 287, the sample size was 167. However, only 156 students participated in the survey.

**Research Instrument** - The researchers used the survey questionnaire they developed as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was used to assess students' awareness of the government's anti-poverty program. The questionnaire had two main sections. Part I assessed the level of awareness of the government's poverty alleviation program among the student respondents, and Part II assessed the program's standing. All the assertions were rated on a four-point Likert scale in which (4) very high, (3) high, (2) slightly low, and (1) very low. The instrument is formatted and calibrated to give definition, precision, and usability in eliciting the data needed for the study.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers employed a face-to-face survey to collect data for this study. In this method, the researchers used a survey in which respondents answered structured questions based on their experiences and observations. This approach enabled prompt assessment of respondents' ease in answering questions, which showed that no particularly sensitive topics were involved. Before conducting the survey, the researchers prepared a consent and endorsement letter, signed by their principal and the subject teacher at Divine Word College of San Jose. This letter served as proof of approval from their school. The researchers then presented the letter to the principal of San Jose National High School (SJNHS) to request permission to conduct the study among Grade 9 and Grade 10 students. After receiving the approval from SJNHS, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaire. Once the survey was fully checked and approved by the adviser, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected Grade 9 and Grade 10 students of SJNHS. Data collection started and ended in one day. The researchers personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaires to ensure a high retrieval rate and accurate responses. After collecting the data, the researchers organized and analyzed the results using statistical analyses.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - The study used descriptive statistics to analyze data collected from respondents. The weighted mean was used to determine students' level of awareness of the government's poverty reduction program, particularly the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), by socio-economic status, program disability, and cultural background. The same statistical tool was also used to determine the program's status regarding benefits, access, and participation processes, and assistance programs. Furthermore, the study used Pearson's *r* to determine the significant relationship between students' level of awareness and their perception of the effectiveness of the government's poverty reduction program.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researchers upheld ethical standards throughout the study period to ensure the respondents' rights, safety, and confidentiality. The researchers informed respondents of the study's purpose before data collection and assured them that participation was voluntary. Informed consent is obtained from all respondents, and they are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researchers also ensured that all personal information obtained from respondents remained confidential and was used solely for academic purposes. To protect respondents' anonymity, no names or personal identification details are revealed in the report, and all collected data is stored safely and accessed only by the researchers. The researchers ensured the study was conducted honestly, ethically, and respectfully so that no one was subjected to harm or distress. By taking these ethical considerations into account, the researchers ensure that the research will be accurate, clear, and respectful of the respondent's privacy and rights.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the mean level of awareness among students by socioeconomic status, program disability, and cultural background, with an overall mean of 2.73, interpreted as High. In terms of socioeconomic status, the composite mean of 2.83 indicates that students generally have a high level of awareness of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) eligibility criteria. However, they may not fully understand the detailed requirements. The Liberal Reform Theory explains that an individual's socioeconomic status influences access to information and awareness of government programs (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2020). The highest mean (3.06) indicates that students are more aware of the benefits that families receive from the program, which may lead to more positive perceptions and support for the program. However, the lowest mean (2.57) shows that students have limited knowledge about how unemployment affects qualification for the program. According to Tejero et al. (2022), an individual's knowledge of government programs is influenced by their socio-economic status, while Rendon and Reroma (2019) explain that limited resources can restrict access to important information about government programs.

Moreover, regarding program disability, the composite mean of 2.66 is interpreted as High, indicating that students generally understand government programs for persons with disabilities (PWDs). This suggests that students recognize the importance of these programs in promoting inclusion. According to Jenkins et.al. (2021), government programs for PWDs promote inclusion and equal access. The highest mean (2.79) indicates that students are more aware of government programs implemented for PWDs, suggesting effective information dissemination. PIDS (2019) emphasized that awareness is important for PWDs to access education and poverty-reduction programs. However, the lowest mean (2.58) indicates that students have less knowledge about special assistance services and the inclusion of PWDs in poverty reduction programs. As emphasized by the National Council on Disability Affairs (2021), there remains a limited understanding of inclusive processes for PWDs.

Lastly, regarding cultural background, the composite mean of 2.71 is interpreted as High, indicating that respondents are generally aware of cultural considerations when implementing the 4Ps program. Beneficiaries' daily lives, family routines, and community traditions shape their understanding of the program. This supports the idea that integrating local culture and language enhances awareness and understanding (Mendoza, 2024). The highest weighted mean (2.85) indicates that beneficiaries are more aware that the government respects cultural practices through flexible use of cash grants and community engagement. This aligns with findings that culturally responsive programs strengthen trust and participation among beneficiaries (University of the Philippines Baguio,

2024). However, the lowest weighted mean (2.60) indicates that culturally sensitive strategies are less noticeable because beneficiaries focus more on immediate needs such as education and food. According to the Department of Tourism (2025), awareness increases when cultural elements are clearly communicated through information and exposure activities.

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Awareness of Students in terms of Socioeconomic Status, Program Disability, and Cultural Background*

Indicators (Socio-Economic Status)	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I am familiar with how the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program supports low-income families	3.06	High
2. I understand the financial assistance provided through the poverty reduction program	3.01	High
3. I recognize how socio-economic background affects eligibility for the program.	2.63	High
4. I realize how family income level influences access to government assistance programs.	2.98	High
5. I know how employment status affects qualification for poverty reduction programs.	2.57	High
6. I am aware of how household size and number of dependents are considered in program eligibility.	2.70	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.83	High
Indicators (Program Disability)		
1. I am familiar with the government programs available for persons with disabilities (PWDs).	2.79	High
2. I understand the benefits and services provided to PWD beneficiaries.	2.73	High
3. I recognize the inclusion of PWDs in government poverty reduction efforts.	2.58	High
4. I am aware of the special assistance programs designed to address the needs of PWDs	2.58	High
5. I know about the priority access provided to PWDs in selected government services.	2.64	High
6. I am aware of the policies that promote equal opportunities for PWDs in social programs.	2.62	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.66	High
Indicators (Cultural background)		
1. I am familiar with the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program for indigenous peoples (IPs) and cultural minorities.	2.68	High
2. I am aware of the culturally sensitive approaches used in government poverty reduction programs	2.60	High
3. I recognize that the program provides equal access regardless of cultural background.	2.65	High
4. I am informed about the government's efforts to respect cultural practices during program implementation.	2.85	High
5. I acknowledge the policies that protect cultural minorities from discrimination in social programs.	2.73	High
6. I am aware of community-based programs that support culturally diverse groups.	2.74	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.71	High
OVERALL MEAN	2.73	High

Scale: 3.26–4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 –2.50 Slightly Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of Government Status in terms of Program Benefit, Access and Participation Processes, and Assistance Program*

Indicators (Program Benefit)	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I am aware that poverty reduction programs aim to improve the lives of low-income families.	2.97	High
2. I understand that the government poverty reduction program (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program) helps reduce income inequality and promote social justice.	2.88	High
3. I am aware that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program encourages school attendance and health check-ups for children.	3.02	High
4. I know that the program aims to help families become self-reliant in the long run.	2.83	High
5. I am aware that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program supports inclusive economic growth.	2.86	High
6. I understand that the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program aims to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty.	2.71	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.88	High

Indicators (Access and Participation processes)		
1. I am familiar with the application process conducted through barangays or LGUs.	2.64	High
2. I know how the government verifies the eligibility of families for assistance.	2.59	High
3. I am aware that beneficiaries must comply with certain conditions to remain in the program.	2.72	High
4. I am aware that the program encourages community participation and transparency.	2.61	High
5. I know how information about the program is announced or disseminated to the public.	2.68	High
6. I understand the role of students and citizens in supporting poverty reduction initiatives.	2.85	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.68	High
Indicators (Assistance program)		
1. I am familiar with how the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program aims to improve the lives of low-income families.	3.06	High
2. I understand that the program provides education, health, and livelihood support.	3.10	High
3. I recognize that the 4Ps help beneficiaries meet their basic needs and improve family well-being.	3.07	High
4. I know that beneficiaries receive cash grants for essential household needs.	2.93	High
5. I am aware that skills training and livelihood workshops are offered through the program.	2.72	High
6. I acknowledge that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program provides nutrition and health assistance for mothers and children.	3.00	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.98	High
OVERALL MEAN	2.85	High

Scale: 3.26 – 4.00 Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 High, 1.76 – 2.50 Slightly Low, 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low

Table 2 presents the mean levels of government status across program benefit, access, and participation processes, and the assistance program, with an overall mean of 2.85, interpreted as High. In terms of program benefit, students are aware of the benefits provided by the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), with a weighted mean of 2.88, interpreted as high. This indicates that students recognize how the program helps beneficiaries meet their basic needs through cash assistance and program activities. This aligns with Halique and Campado (2025), who stated that the program supports beneficiaries through health and educational assistance. The highest mean (3.02) indicates that respondents are aware that the program provides assistance and resources that benefit their lives, such as free health checkups and improved school attendance. This supports the findings of Abrigo et al. (2022), which show that the program improves school participation and access to health services. Meanwhile, the lowest mean (2.71) indicates reduced awareness of the program's goal to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. According to Reyes et al. (2015), the program aims not only to address immediate needs but also to prepare the next generation for long-term development.

Furthermore, regarding access and participation processes, the composite mean of 2.68 is interpreted as High, indicating that students generally understand how individuals access and participate in government programs. According to Osinski (2021), participation processes help individuals understand how they can effectively engage in programs and fulfill expected responsibilities. The highest mean (2.85) indicates that students are aware of their roles as citizens in supporting poverty-reduction programs. This supports Sasaki et al. (2019), who emphasized that social programs such as the 4Ps become more effective when beneficiaries actively participate. However, the lowest mean (2.59) indicates limited awareness of the government's role in verifying family eligibility. As explained by Ngangi et al. (2021), technical procedures and participation mechanisms in government programs are often not well understood by community members.

Lastly, regarding the assistance program, the composite mean of 2.98 is interpreted as High, indicating that students generally understand the purpose of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). This aligns with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2015), which states that the program assists low-income families in meeting their needs. The highest weighted mean (3.10) shows that students are most aware of financial and

educational assistance. Similarly, PIDS (2014) explains that the 4Ps provides cash grants for education and health services to poor Filipino families. However, the lowest weighted mean (2.72) indicates lower awareness of livelihood assistance and skills training. Green Valley College Foundation Inc. (n.d.) noted that some beneficiaries remain less aware of the full range of program components. Moreover, Republic Act No. 11310 (2019) institutionalized the 4Ps as a national poverty reduction strategy and defined the roles of the government and beneficiaries.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Awareness (Socio Economic Status)→ Status (Program Benefits)	0.670	0.448	1.976	11.200	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness Program Disability)→ Status (Program Benefits)	0.488	0.238	1.976	6.938	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Cultural Background)→ Status (Program Benefits)	0.639	0.409	1.976	10.309	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status (Program Benefits)	0.714	0.510	1.976	12.655	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Socio Economic Status)→ Status (Access and participation process)	0.594	0.353	1.976	9.163	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness Program Disability)→ Status (Access and participation process)	0.461	0.213	1.976	6.447	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Cultural Background)→ Status (Access and participation process)	0.718	0.515	1.976	12.801	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status (Access and participation process)	0.705	0.498	1.976	12.336	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Socio Economic Status)→ Status (Assistance program)	0.646	0.417	1.976	10.502	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness Program Disability)→ Status (Assistance program )	0.470	0.221	1.976	6.608	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness (Cultural Background)→ Status (Assistance program )	0.520	0.270	1.976	7.555	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status (Assistance program)	0.651	0.424	1.976	10.643	<0.001	Highly Significant
Awareness → Status	0.764	0.583	1.976	11.694	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.001 Highly Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients and p-values for hypothesis testing. The awareness level shows a strong correlation with Program Benefits, with a correlation coefficient of 0.714 and statistical significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). This shows that the awareness level has a positive effect on the Program Benefits, as the high value of the correlation coefficient (i.e., the positive value of  $r$ ) indicates this. At the same time, the results are statistically significant, as the p-value is less than 0.001. Therefore, it can be suggested that the program needs to enhance awareness, which would, in turn, improve perceptions of the Program Benefits, enabling students to utilize the resources and form a positive evaluation of the program. This has also been supported by the findings of Dioses et al. (2019), who found that awareness of the benefits has a positive impact. The awareness level shows a strong

correlation with the Access and Participation Process, with a correlation coefficient of 0.705 and a p-value of  $< 0.001$ . This shows that the awareness level has a positive effect on the Access and Participation Process, as the high value of the correlation coefficient (i.e., the positive value of  $r$ ) indicates this. At the same time, the results are statistically significant, as the p-value is less than 0.001. Therefore, it is suggested that the program provide clear guidance on the Access and Participation Process, thereby enhancing awareness and enabling students to participate with confidence. This has also been supported by Herrera et al. (2023), who found that awareness positively impacts engagement. In addition, awareness shows a strong, significant correlation with the Assistance Program ( $r = 0.651$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The high value of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) suggests that students who are aware of the assistance view it as helpful and know how to use it. The p-value is also significant. It is recommended that the program ensure that information about the assistance program is clear and communicated effectively to students so they can access it with confidence. This is supported by Bernarte's (2015) observation that awareness is important for enhancing engagement and utilization of the assistance. Finally, the correlation coefficient between overall awareness and the program's effectiveness is very high ( $r = 0.764$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that overall awareness is strongly related to the program's overall effectiveness. The p-value is also significant. This suggests that overall awareness can be improved to enhance the success of the government's poverty reduction program. be enhanced.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusion was presented: The study revealed that students have a strong awareness of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The students were aware of the purpose and benefits of the program. They were also aware of the program's assistance to low-income families. The students were most aware of the program's assistance in education and health. They were also aware of the program's requirements, which include attending school and undergoing health check-ups. The study also revealed that the students are aware of the importance of cultural sensitivity in implementing the program. The students were also aware of their roles as recipients of the program. There is a strong link between students' awareness and their assessment of the government's poverty reduction program. The more aware they were of the program, the better they could evaluate it.

**Recommendations** - Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made. School administrators and guidance counselors may establish "4Ps Advocacy Corners" or information hubs on campus. Because students are already well informed, these centers can go beyond basic information to provide updates on compliance timelines and new policy requirements affecting students' eligibility. Social Welfare Officers (DSWD) and Parent Leaders may hold specific "Peer-to-Peer Leadership Workshops" for student awardees. Because the study found that students understand their duties and the value of cultural sensitivity, allowing them to serve as mentors for younger 4Ps beneficiaries can boost community-level compliance and social responsibility. Teachers and curriculum developers can incorporate localized case studies from the 4Ps program into Social Science or Araling Panlipunan classes. Given the relationship between awareness and the ability to evaluate government services, using the 4Ps as a practical example can help students develop their critical-thinking and civic-participation skills. Student Government Leaders can organize "Reciprocal Service Projects" in which 4Ps recipients lead community- or school-based activities. This strengthens students' understanding of their duties as active participants rather than passive recipients and fosters a sense of dignity and cultural pride. Lastly, future researchers may consider other variables that could similarly affect students' awareness of the government's poverty reduction program.

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## Participation of senior high school students in community activities and their sense of belonging

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### **Abstract**

Engagement in community activities is essential for fostering youth's social development and strengthening their ties to the community. Although youth engagement has been extensively examined in numerous studies, the relationship between senior high school students' sense of belonging and their participation in community activities at private Catholic institutions has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. This study aimed to determine the relationship between senior high school students' sense of belonging at Divine Word College of San Jose and their participation in community activities during the 2025-2026 academic year. A total of 412 students, from both Grade 11 and Grade 12, were selected via stratified random sampling to participate in the study, which employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design. A 30-item modified questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect the data. The data were analyzed using the weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The findings indicated a high level of acceptance, strong social relationships, a sense of emotional security, and moderate participation in community activities. Additionally, the findings showed a strong positive correlation between participation and sense of belonging. The results indicate that students who participate more in community activities tend to feel a stronger sense of belonging. Lastly, the statistically significant, moderately to strongly positive correlations suggest that greater involvement in community activities is associated with higher levels of belonging, particularly regarding acceptance, interpersonal connection, and emotional equilibrium. Consequently, schools and community stakeholders are advised to strengthen youth-centered programs and collaborative activities that promote active participation and inclusive environments.

**Keywords:** community activities, sense of belonging, youth participation, senior high school, Catholic school

## **Organizational culture, knowledge sharing and employee innovative performance: Basis for machine manufacturing industry organizational learning framework**

### **1. Introduction**

Young people make a great contribution to building a community. As Hamilton (2024) points out, with their intense energy and new perspective, they can offer new ideas that older generations have not noticed or considered. Whiting (2024) also emphasizes the importance of young people participating in community activities. This enables them to define their responsibilities and practice their leadership skills, helping them prepare for future challenges. Additionally, young people's ability to interact with others helps them share ideas and information more easily. It encourages others to do the same, especially through social media platforms, as stated by Anderson and Jiang (2018). Furthermore, the study of Tabanao et al. (2025) indicates that numerous young people help in their communities. For example, they join clean-up drives and outreach programs that their schools often organize. Many young people participate in community activities, such as clean-up drives and outreach programs, often conducted by schools in which they are members, as noted by Tabanao et al. (2025). Many of them also volunteer for community service at the direction of the Philippine government or consider or take action to help those less fortunate than themselves. (Castillon, 2022; Tabanao et al., 2025). That this kind of engagement is evident is very clear in the study conducted by Mabazza et al. (2025), which found that many Filipino students engage in community work in various forms. However, the degree of engagement may depend on the form of community work.

These studies show that Filipino students continue to be involved in the Philippines' community service efforts and environmental service efforts. Their involvement exemplifies ongoing community engagement. By doing good things, young people display positive examples. This representation shows that, no matter their age, they can still make a difference. As stated in Rojas (2020), young people are indeed the "hope of the future." It discusses that the decisions they make today will contribute to what might happen in society tomorrow. However, not all young people can feel that they are part of their communities. Calawa et al. (2023) observed that many individuals lose interest or feel disconnected from their community due to insufficient opportunities in their area or a belief that their contributions go unrecognized or unappreciated. This lack of connection can weaken their emotional bond with the community and reduce their motivation to join. Hence, Lopez and Baya (2025) point out that young people's participation in community activities is important because it fosters a sense of belonging and connection. When young people feel accepted and appreciated, they are more likely to get involved, which benefits both them and the community. While several studies have been conducted elsewhere, little is known about the participation of Senior High School students in community activities at private Catholic schools such as Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). Most earlier studies focused only on participation rates, awareness levels, or types of activities, but not on how participation relates to students' sense of belonging. It is very important to address this research gap to understand better how students' participation in community activities enhances their sense of belonging.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the relationship between senior high school students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of participation of senior high school students in community activities in terms of frequency of participation, types of community activities, and involvement? (2) What is the level of sense of belonging among senior high school students in terms of sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging?

**Significance of the Study** - This study aims to provide reliable knowledge on how senior high school students' participation in community activities affects their sense of belonging. This study will be beneficial for young

individuals as they develop their sense of identity as citizens in their community, resulting in them being more participative and engaging in their community. Also, for those who play an important role in creating enjoyable and engaging programs that benefit young individuals, such as youth organizations and NGOs, this study will be of great help. This can serve as a guide for them in developing more effective, enhanced community-based activities. Moreover, to better understand the needs of their young citizens and deepen their relationships with young people, this study will help the government and youth leaders encourage participation in youth activities and programs, particularly community-based ones. As well as the parents and guardians to be more supportive of their senior high school children participating in community activities, and to better understand how such participation affects their children's sense of belonging. It can also be a way for them to encourage their children to participate in community development. Similarly, this study will greatly contribute to schools and their personnel in developing youth-centered, youth-led school programs. It will encourage students to participate in activities not only at school but also in the broader community. This will also help strengthen the relationship between the school and communities by organizing youth activities that prioritize a sense of belonging. Lastly, for those who may choose this field of study in the future, this study will serve as a guide. This can be used as a basis and a reference to understand this research and related research further.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study was conducted at Divine Word College of San Jose during the second semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, with senior high school students as participants. The scope of the research was limited to three primary areas: (1) assessing the level of student participation in community activities in terms of frequency, type, and involvement; (2) evaluating their sense of belonging, specifically through sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security; and (3) examining the relationship between participation in community activities and the students' sense of belonging. The study's findings are limited to the perspectives and experiences of those senior high school students enrolled at Divine Word College of San Jose during the specified academic term. However, this study had several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the results may not have represented every senior high school student because the study only includes certain strands such as Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (ASSH), Business and Entrepreneurship (BAE), and Science and Technology (STEM) in Grade 11 and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), Accountancy and Business Management (ABM), and Science and Technology (STEM) in Grade 12 within Divine Word College of San Jose only. It might also not have shown the lived experiences of students from other strands, schools, or places.

Additionally, due to the limited time available to conduct the study, it could not examine the long-term effects of participation in community activities on participants' sense of belonging. The accuracy of the results from the collected data might also have been uncertain, as it depended mainly on the participants' honesty in answering the survey questions. And finally, the study did not consider other influential external factors, such as family circumstances, socioeconomic background, or peer influence, which could have significantly affected its findings. Although the purpose of this research was to provide clear insights, it was also crucial to recognize the extent to which it was covered and the aspects that remained unrecognized.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational method to provide statistical analysis of the data. This design allows the researchers to both describe the variables in the study and examine the relationship between students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging. On the other hand, the correlational part was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between these two variables. The descriptive part of the study examined the extent of their participation in various community activities. In contrast, the correlational part examined the relationship between participation in these activities and their sense of belonging. Similarly, Clarete et al. (2023) used a descriptive-correlational research design to describe the variables and determine whether they were related among senior high school students. This supports the use of the same research design in the present study.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of this study were senior high school students enrolled at Divine

Word College of San Jose during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The total population consisted of 412 students across different academic strands. A stratified sampling technique was used to select the total number of respondents for the study based on their grade level and strands. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level to ensure the reliability of the results (Ellen, 2022). Consequently, a total of 203 students were chosen from different academic strands. This method ensured that every student had an equal chance of being chosen. It ensured the validity and generalizability of the results.

**Research Instrument** - The study utilized adapted questionnaires from the studies of Gates et al. (2021), Doolittle and Faul (2013), Berry et al. (2007), Gyan (2021), Laurian (2004), Huguen et al. (2006), Kumawil et al. (2024), and Chen and Ma (2018) to describe the participation of senior high school students of Divine Word College of San Jose in community activities and their sense of belonging. The research questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part had 15 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. It ranged from 5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never. It mainly assesses the level of participation of senior high school students in community activities (independent variable). Part II also includes 15 items that assess respondents' sense of belonging (the dependent variable). To determine the validity and reliability of the adapted questionnaires, the researchers sought the help of three experts in the field of research from the senior high school department. The comments and suggestions of the experts were incorporated in the first checking of the adapted questionnaires. The instrument was modified to suit the context of senior high school students while retaining the reliability and structure of the sources.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers sought approval from the senior high school principal and the research adviser to conduct the study at Divine Word College of San Jose. A formal request was submitted for permission to distribute the research questionnaires to the selected participants. After receiving approval, the researchers asked the class advisers for permission to schedule the survey. Before the survey began, the study's purpose was explained to the participants, and their voluntary participation was emphasized. They were especially assured that all information collected would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. A copy of 203 validated questionnaires was printed and distributed to the selected sample of students from the senior high school. The researchers personally administered the survey during class hours over two days. Upon completion, all questionnaires are collected immediately to prevent data loss or duplicate responses. The data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to understand the relationship between senior high school students' involvement in community activities and their sense of belonging.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - The researchers employed the following statistical procedures to analyze the data. The data gathered from respondents is organized and analyzed in Microsoft Excel to ensure clear and reliable results. The Weighted Mean was chosen because it clearly demonstrates how the responses expanded and helps the researchers identify patterns common among the students. It was used to calculate the amount of participation of senior high school students in community activities and their sense of belonging. A 5-point Likert-type measurement tool, the Organizational Competency Scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always), was used to summarize respondents' overall opinions and perspectives and to indicate how likely they are to agree with each statement. To measure the relationship between the two variables, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) was used. This summarizes how participation changes their sense of belonging. A value near +1 indicates a strong positive correlation, meaning that increased participation is associated with a stronger sense of belonging. In contrast, a value near -1 indicates a negative correlation, in which increased participation is associated with a reduced sense of belonging. A value of 0 indicates minimal or no connection between the two.

**Ethical Considerations** - Each researcher strictly adhered to the ethical principles in conducting this study. Each of them respected the rights, privacy, and dignity of each participant. Before collecting data, they clearly explained the purpose of this research. Each student's participation was based on their consent, and they were informed that they could stop the survey at any time. Any information gathered from them was kept confidential, and none of it was disclosed to its source. This was also used solely for academic purposes and was discarded after the research was complete. The researchers also aimed to avoid bias and data manipulation to maintain honesty

and integrity. Following these principles strengthened the credibility and reliability of this study's results. Researchers also ensured equality so that every student had an equal opportunity to participate. Finally, they followed the school's ethical guidelines to maintain professionalism and transparency throughout the study.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Mean Level of Participation in terms of Frequency of Participation, Types of Community Activities, and Involvement*

Indicators (Frequency of Participation)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I attend community development activities (e.g., livelihood programs, tree planting, leadership training, disaster drills).	3.55	High
2. I take an active part in organized group activities (e.g., choir practice, sports training, school clubs).	3.73	High
3. I attend weekly worship services.	3.48	Moderate
4. I attend health-related workshops where I can learn about nutrition, hygiene, and mental health.	3.39	Moderate
5. I participate in public meetings or clean-up drives.	3.25	Moderate
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.48	Moderate
Indicators (Types of Community Activities)		
1. I participate in barangay or community service activities (e.g., clean-ups, tree planting).	2.86	Moderate
2. I join in volunteering or outreach programs (e.g., feeding programs, charity drives)	3.24	Moderate
3. I attend local civic or community events (e.g., barangay assemblies, community fairs).	2.82	Moderate
4. I attend local civic or community events (e.g., barangay assemblies, community fairs).	2.95	Moderate
5. I participate in youth leadership or development activities within the community.	3.16	Moderate
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.01	Moderate
Indicators (Involvement)		
1. I involve myself in structured volunteer positions in the community.	3.18	Moderate
2. I involve myself in collaborating with local authorities or organizations in organizing community clean-up drives.	3.09	Moderate
3. I stay informed of events in my community.	3.39	Moderate
4. I help members of my community	3.39	Moderate
5. I contribute to charitable organizations within the community.	3.28	Moderate
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.27	Moderate
OVERALL MEAN	3.25	Moderate

Legend: 4.51-5.00 Very high, 3.51-4.50 High, 2.51 - 3.50 Moderate, 1.51-2.50 Low, 1.00- 1.50 Very low

Table 1 presents the mean levels of participation in terms of frequency, types of community activities, and involvement, with an overall mean of 3.48, interpreted as moderate. Frequency of participation, particularly in community activities such as sports and school clubs, reached a high mean of 3.73; activities like public meetings and clean-up drives remained at 3.25. These results align with Apalla et al. (2025) and Valenzuela (2025), who suggest that youth favor organized structures with clearly defined roles, whereas Tabanao et al. (2025) note that formal civic processes led by local government units often see lower engagement. Moreover, participation in different types of community development activities yielded a composite mean of 3.01. Interpreted as a moderate mean level, outreach and volunteering activities, such as feeding programs, showed the highest mean level involvement at 3.24, suggesting a willingness to help that Guo et al. (2025) connect to a developing sense of purpose and social belonging. In contrast, attendance at local civic events or barangay assemblies had the lowest mean, 2.82, indicating that students may face barriers to accessing these events or have limited interest in formal community governance.

Lastly, the overall involvement across all indicators for senior high school students resulted in a composite mean of 3.27. Staying informed about community events and helping neighbors directly recorded the highest mean of 3.39, which Stukas et al. (2016) attribute to these being simpler, direct forms of interaction. However, a lower mean level of 3.09, interpreted as moderate, was observed for collaborating with authorities on organized clean-

up drives. As noted by Greenfield and Moorman (2016) and Retallick and Foreman (2016), this level of engagement often reflects earlier experiences and limitations related to time, roles, and the complexity of the crucial commitment.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Sense of Belonging in terms of Sense of Acceptance, Social Connections, and Emotional Security*

Indicators (Sense of Acceptance)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.	3.95	High
2. I feel included when community events are held.	3.54	High
3. I believe my contributions to the community are appreciated	3.73	High
4. I feel encouraged to express myself in community activities.	3.57	High
5. I feel accepted and respected by people in my community.	3.86	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.73	High
Indicators (Social Connections)		
1. I think people enjoy the same social activities I do.	3.75	High
2. I have relationships where my competence and skill are recognized.	3.68	High
3. I think people admire my talents and abilities.	3.47	Moderate
4. I think people like the things I do.	3.49	Moderate
5. I think people respect my skills and abilities.	3.70	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.62	High
Indicators (Emotional Security)		
1. I feel like I have close personal relationships with other people.	3.81	High
2. I have someone I can turn to for guidance in times of stress.	3.87	High
3. I have close relationships with my community members that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being.	3.61	High
4. I have a feeling of intimacy with another person.	3.42	Moderate
5. I believe that my opinions are valued by others in the community.	3.67	High
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.67	High
OVERALL MEAN	3.67	High

Legend: 4.51-5.00 Very high, 3.51-4.50 High, 2.51 - 3.50 Moderate, 1.51-2.50 Low; 1.00 - 1.50 Very low

Table 2 presents the mean levels of sense of belonging across the domains of sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security. A composite mean of 3.73, interpreted as high, was achieved, indicating acceptance among respondents. This demonstrates that students feel a strong sense of belonging, which Meier et al. (2025) and Taylor (2025) attribute to greater acknowledgement and reduced stress. High mean levels of this indicator indicate an accepting environment, as noted by Leon-Himmelstine et al. (2025), which promotes social bonds, reduces feelings of isolation, and encourages better coordination within the community.

Moreover, the results of the level of social connections show a high composite mean of 3.62. The highest indicator has a mean level of 3.75, which states, "I think people enjoy the same social activities I do," reflecting deep social integration through interests that are shared. At the same time, Fabris et al. (2023) and Montecillo et al. (2024) imply that such environments enhance motivation. The admiration of personal talents, interpreted as moderate, had a lower mean (3.47). This suggests that students feel like they belong socially but are not fully validated for their participation. This is connected with Hurem et al. (2021), who suggest that true belonging needs mutual understanding of unique abilities. Finally, the level of sense of belonging in terms of emotional security yielded a high composite mean of 3.67. Students reported a strong reliance on others for guidance during stress, with a high mean of 3.87, though intimacy with others was lower, with a moderate mean of 3.42. These results align with the work of Dias et al. (2024), which emphasizes that emotional security is a pillar of personal development. While students possess robust support systems, the data indicate a need to further bridge the gap between general social support and deeper emotional intimacy.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Students' participation (Frequency of participation) → Sense of belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.575	0.331	1.972	9.989	<0.001	Highly Significant

Organizational culture, knowledge sharing and employee innovative performance

Students' participation (Type of community activities) → Sense of belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.645	0.417	1.972	11.996	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Involvement) → Sense of belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.629	0.396	1.972	11.500	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' Participation: Sense of Belonging (Sense of Acceptance)	0.679	0.461	1.972	13.145	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Frequency of participation) → Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.484	0.234	1.972	7.861	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Type of community activities) → Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.514	0.264	1.972	8.516	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Involvement) - Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.546	0.298	1.972	9.263	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation → Sense of belonging (Social Connections)	0.566	0.320	1.972	9.758	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Frequency of participation) → Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.453	0.205	1.972	7.222	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Type of community activities) → Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.505	0.255	1.972	8.316	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation (Involvement) Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.527	0.277	1.972	8.813	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation → Sense of belonging (Emotional Security)	0.545	0.297	1.972	9.239	<0.001	Highly Significant
Students' participation → Sense of belonging	0.677	0.458	1.972	13.074	<0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value<0.001 Highly Significant

p-value <0.05 Significant

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients, t-values, and p-values assessing the association between student participation and their sense of belonging across three dimensions: sense of acceptance, social connections, and emotional security. The computed p-values, all below 0.001, signify highly significant relationships among all examined variables. The strong positive correlation between student participation and the overall sense of belonging ( $r = 0.677$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates a notable relationship. The effect size of 0.458 suggests that participation significantly explains the differences in feelings of belonging. Regarding the individual dimensions, the most substantial relationship was observed between overall participation and sense of acceptance ( $r = 0.679$ , effect size = 0.461), followed by social connections ( $r = 0.566$ , effect size = 0.320) and emotional security ( $r = 0.545$ , effect size = 0.297). Research indicates that increased student engagement, measured by how often they participate, the variety of activities they engage in, and the depth of their involvement, is linked to a stronger sense of belonging, encompassing both emotional and social aspects.

These notable connections between participation and a sense of belonging align with previous research

highlighting the importance of active involvement in promoting both inclusion and acknowledgment. Meier et al.'s (2025) research showed that regular interaction and teamwork reduce stress and increase feelings of value and belonging, especially during difficult times. Similarly, Taylor (2025) found that adolescents' involvement in collaborative or team-based activities strengthens their feelings of connection and acceptance. Moreover, Mikula et al.'s (2025) research suggested that sustained engagement in communal events cultivates both interpersonal trust and a shared sense of identity over time. This study's findings, particularly the strong correlation ( $r = 0.679$ ) between overall participation and acceptance, support previous research by demonstrating that consistent, organized engagement significantly improves students' sense of belonging within their community.

Likewise, the positive relationships between participation and both social connections and emotional security align with existing theoretical and empirical literature. Hurem et al. (2021) and Fabris et al. (2023) underscored the importance of strong peer relationships and regular interaction in group settings, asserting that these factors bolster students' sense of connectedness and psychological well-being. Dias et al. (2024) additionally found that secure peer relationships are associated with greater engagement and academic motivation. In summary, the statistically significant, moderately to strongly positive correlations suggest that greater involvement in community activities is associated with higher levels of belonging, particularly regarding acceptance, interpersonal connection, and emotional equilibrium.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the study's findings. The findings showed that the respondents are socially active and willing to participate in organized activities in their community. This means that students are open to interacting with others and taking part in activities that bring people together. The study also found that many respondents participate in outreach programs and other activities that help people in need. This shows that students are willing to support their community and contribute to activities that benefit others. The results further revealed that respondents are aware of community activities and willing to support other community members. This reflects their interest in being involved and cooperating with others in the community. It was also found that students feel a stronger sense of belonging when they are part of groups that share similar interests, beliefs, and activities. Having common values and experiences helps strengthen their connection with other members of the community. In addition, the respondents reported having someone they can turn to for guidance or support during stressful situations. This suggests that students experience social support within their community. Overall, the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging. This means that students who are more involved in community activities tend to feel more accepted and connected within their community.

**Recommendations** - The following recommendations are made based on the findings and conclusions of the study. First, the school administrators and teachers may encourage senior high school students to participate more in community activities by providing clear information about upcoming events and inviting students to join barangay programs and school-supported activities. Recognizing students who actively participate may also help motivate others to become more involved in community initiatives. Furthermore, schools and community organizations may help students feel more accepted and valued by fostering a welcoming, supportive environment during activities. Encouraging cooperation, teamwork, and open interaction among students may help strengthen their sense of belonging both in school and in the community. In addition, school officials and community leaders may continue working together to organize programs that enable students to participate in meaningful community activities. Through active participation, students may develop stronger connections with others and build a deeper sense of belonging within their community. Lastly, future researchers may conduct similar studies in other schools or communities and include a larger number of respondents to obtain more generalizable results. They may also consider examining other factors that may influence students' participation in community activities and their sense of belonging.

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# Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997: Students' awareness and their participation in community extension programs

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the level of awareness of senior high school students regarding the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 and to determine the relationship between their awareness and participation in community extension programs related to Indigenous Peoples. The researcher utilized a descriptive-correlational research design and a validated researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 25 items, which was distributed to 200 students. The findings revealed that the students have a high level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. Likewise, the extent of their participation in community extension programs was found to be high, particularly in donation, gift-giving, and outreach. Furthermore, the results showed a significant relationship between students' level of awareness and their participation in community extension programs. The findings show that increased awareness of Indigenous Peoples' rights may lead to greater student involvement in activities that support Indigenous peoples. Also, the findings indicate that students with higher levels of IPRA awareness tended to participate more in community extension programs through donations, gift-giving, and outreach activities in support of Indigenous Peoples. Thus, this study recommends that school administrators and community extension personnel may encourage students to participate in community extension programs, such as donation, gift-giving, outreach programs, or forums and seminars with indigenous peoples, by providing platforms and resources to plan and implement activities during school events, club meetings; facilitating partnerships with local Indigenous communities or NGOs to ensure valuable participation; offering mentorship, guidance, and feedback to ensure student initiatives are organized

effectively and are culturally respectful.

**Keywords:** community extension programs, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, student awareness, outreach programs, student involvement

## **Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997: Students' awareness and their participation in community extension programs**

### **1. Introduction**

The rights and participation of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in governance in the Philippines are recognized through the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, which provides mechanisms to ensure that Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) are represented in decision-making processes. This is supported by the study of Villanueva et al. (2017), which discusses one such mechanism: the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR). The IPMR serves as the official representative of IP communities in local legislative councils and advocates for their interests and welfare. However, despite the presence of such institutional mechanisms, Indigenous Peoples (IPs) worldwide continue to be deeply marginalized in political, social, and economic spheres. As noted by Natividad et al. (2024), international frameworks promote Indigenous rights, yet many IPs remain underrepresented. They face limited access to services and struggle to preserve their culture. Throughout the Philippines, these global challenges are also evident, given that Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) comprise an underserved portion of the population.

In 1997, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act No. 8371, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA). It was created to address historical injustices and institutional discrimination. The law formally recognized IPs' rights to ancestral domains, self-governance, cultural integrity, and social justice. Furthermore, the state was mandated to protect these rights. Inclusive programs within education, health, and development are intended to support these goals. As emphasized by Monfred & Martinez (2023), the IPRA gained international recognition for its detailed approach, as it positioned the Philippines as Asia's legislative leader in Indigenous rights protection. While the IPRA holds significant promise, its implementation remains a persistent challenge. This impact has been limited due to insufficient information dissemination, inadequate public education, and weak community-level engagement. As Eduardo & Gabriel (2021) noted, many Indigenous communities are unaware of their legal rights, thereby reducing their ability to assert claims and benefit from state protection. Consequently, the promise of IPRA has largely remained even two decades after its enactment.

Educational institutions serve as a cornerstone for promoting awareness, civic responsibility, and cultural sensitivity. In this context, Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ), a Catholic institution rooted in social mission, has conducted initiatives, specifically the Mangyan Education Center. Through this outreach program, the institution provides access to education for Indigenous people while cultivating intercultural understanding among students. Despite the encouragement provided by these programs, evidence on whether students' awareness of IPRA directly influences participation in community extension activities remains limited. This disconnect between students' awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 and its influence on participation in community extension highlights a critical gap in both research and practice. Moreover, no study has examined how students' awareness of the IPRA of 1997 may influence their participation in initiatives supporting Indigenous communities in the local context of DWCSJ.

This study aimed to fill that gap by determining how awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 influences participation in community extension programs among Senior High School students of DWCSJ. By determining this relationship, the study sought to contribute to improving civic education, developing culturally responsive programs, and promoting deeper student engagement in Indigenous advocacy.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to determine the level of awareness of Senior High School students on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 and its relationship to their involvement in community extension programs and initiatives concerning Indigenous peoples. Specifically, the researchers sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of awareness of senior high school students of Divine Word College

of San Jose regarding the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997? (2) What is the extent of participation in community extension programs related to Indigenous Peoples, in terms of donation, gift-giving, and outreach programs? (3) Is there a significant relationship between students' level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 and their participation in the community extension programs of Divine Word College of San Jose?

**Significance of the Study** - The researcher believed that the study's outcome could bring significant benefits to several groups of individuals and sectors within the community. Primarily, students may benefit from this as it encourages them to reflect on their understanding and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It motivates them to actively participate in community extension programs that facilitate awareness and support for Indigenous communities. Furthermore, Indigenous communities can raise students' advocacy and awareness regarding benefits for Indigenous Peoples, which can help protect and promote their welfare and rights. In addition, educators can gain valuable insights into Indigenous rights, enabling them to help schools develop programs that encourage students to engage in community extension activities. Moreover, school administrators can use the findings to improve policies and initiatives that promote collaboration between the school and Indigenous communities. Similarly, the community may benefit from implementing the study to build strong relationships and partnerships between educational institutions and Indigenous groups, fostering support and growth. Finally, future researchers may find the study's results beneficial, as they can serve as a valuable reference. This study provides a basis for further research and offers ideas for students who aim to conduct a similar study.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study aimed to determine the level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 among the Senior High School (SHS) students of the Divine Word College of San Jose and to examine its relationship to their involvement in community extension programs, with a focus on areas that concern Indigenous Peoples (IPs). The study covered Grade 11 and Grade 12 students enrolled in the 2025-2026 school year. The study assessed their knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, their awareness of Indigenous peoples' rights, and whether that awareness motivated them to participate in a community extension program. The study was limited to Grade 11 and 12 students, thereby excluding insights from Junior High School students, college students, and faculty members, who may also have relevant perspectives.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between the level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 and participation in community extension activities among Senior High School students of Divine Word College of San Jose. The descriptive component assessed the level of awareness of the IPRA among the students, as well as the extent of their participation in community extension activities, specifically through donations, outreach programs, and gift-giving. Meanwhile, the correlational design was used to test whether students' awareness of the IPRA is significantly related to their level of participation in these community extension activities.

**Respondents of the Study** - The students of the Divine Word College of San Jose were the respondents of the study, especially the senior high school students enrolled in the 2025-2026 academic year. Those students were enrolled under the academic tracks of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), Accountancy and Business Management (ABM), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). These students were the respondents of the study because they consistently participated in community extension programs, such as donations, outreach, and gift-giving, to help the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) community. Their participation, activities, and understanding of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) provided relevant information that addressed the study's objectives. A sample size calculation was conducted using Raosoft's Sample Size Calculator with a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a 50% population proportion. Of the total population of 412 Senior High School students, 200 respondents were the required sample size. The sample was proportionally allocated to Grade 11 and Grade 12 students to ensure fair representation of both academic levels.

**Research Instrument** - The primary research instrument for this study was a researcher-made questionnaire designed to gather data on senior high school students' awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 and their participation in community extension activities. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, and it was composed of twenty-five (25) questions. The items in this section were constructed using a four-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or knowledge. The first section determined the awareness of the IPRA. This section focused on determining the respondents' level of awareness, understanding, and attitudes toward the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. It includes statements designed to measure students' familiarity with the provisions of the IPRA, their understanding of the rights guaranteed to Indigenous Peoples, and their perception of the IPRA's importance in promoting equality and cultural preservation. The second section aimed to determine the extent of students' participation in community extension activities related to Indigenous Peoples. It included items that measure the frequency of donations, level of involvement in outreach programs, and participation in gift-giving or volunteer initiatives organized by the school or other organizations. The purpose of this section was to determine how actively students engaged in community extension programs that supported or involved Indigenous communities. The research questionnaires underwent expert validation by three specialists in the field of research and education. Each indicator was determined to ensure transparency, relevance, and appropriateness to address the study's objectives.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - A formal request letter was submitted to the senior high school coordinator and the school principal of Divine Word College of San Jose to ask for approval to conduct the study. The researchers prepared a researcher-made questionnaire. Once approved, the validated survey questionnaires were distributed personally to the selected senior high school students. To uphold ethical standards, the researchers began by clarifying the purpose of the study, guaranteeing the confidentiality of responses, and emphasizing that participation was voluntary. To ensure the accuracy of the results, the researchers closely monitored the method and addressed any questions or concerns from participants. After allowing sufficient time for the survey questionnaires to be completed, they were collected and reviewed to ensure they were filled out completely. It took 3 days to complete the data-gathering procedure. The gathered data was then organized and encoded for analysis.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - The weighted mean was utilized to determine the level of students' awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) and the extent of their participation in community extension programs. Moreover, Pearson's R Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the relationship between the two main variables: students' awareness of IPRA and their participation in community extension activities. This inferential statistical tool measured the degree and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

**Ethical Considerations** - This study adhered to the ethical standards and the general principles of research ethics. Before obtaining consent, researchers ensured that respondents were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality standards. To ensure the respondents' understanding and right to decline at any time without consequence, a letter of informed consent was provided. As researchers upheld ethical standards, all data collected was handled with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Personal information was never revealed, and all responses were securely accumulated and accessible only to the researchers. Under the supervision of the research adviser, the researchers also ensured cultural sensitivity and respect, especially when talking about topics related to Indigenous Peoples' rights and community participation. Approval from the school administration and relevant authorities was obtained before data collection to ensure compliance with institutional ethical guidelines.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the level of awareness of Senior High School students on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. Regarding awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) among Senior High School students, the results indicated a high level of awareness, as evidenced by a composite mean of 3.36, which was classified as high. The highest weighted mean from among the 10 indicators was obtained by Indicator 5. This indicator stated

that "I believe students should be educated about IPRA and Indigenous Peoples' rights," with a weighted mean of 3.57, which was determined as high. This evidence indicated that students strongly recognized the important role of education in promoting awareness and understanding of Indigenous Peoples' rights. This result aligned with the study of Norberte (2024), which showed that students' awareness and perceptions of the IPRA were strongly improved through the effective implementation of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) and school responsiveness. This finding supported the high results of indicators associated with the significance of IPRA, social responsibility, and the function of education and institutions in nurturing Indigenous Peoples' rights.

**Table 1***Mean Level of Awareness of Senior High School Students on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997*

Awareness of Senior High School Students on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
I am aware that the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 exists as a law in the Philippines.	3.27	High
I know that IPRA seeks to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.	3.27	High
I have learned about IPRA from school subjects and discussions.	3.03	Moderate High
I believe IPRA is important for promoting equality and justice for Indigenous Peoples.	3.45	High
I believe students should be educated about IPRA and indigenous peoples' rights.	3.57	High
I am aware that the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 was enacted to address historical injustices experienced by Indigenous Peoples.	3.32	High
I am aware that government agencies are responsible for implementing the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997	3.24	Moderate High
I am aware that schools and educational institutions play a role in promoting awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997.	3.37	High
I believe that awareness of IPRA helps reduce discrimination against Indigenous Peoples.	3.45	High
I believe that understanding the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 helps students become more socially responsible citizens.	3.50	High
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>High</b>

Legend: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was obtained by Indicator 3, which stated that "I have learned about IPRA from school subjects and discussions," with a weighted mean of 3.03, which is determined as Moderate High. The lowest weighted mean indicated that, while students possessed a level of awareness of the IPRA, their awareness of the topic in classroom discussions appeared limited. Similarly, the lowest weighted mean shown in Indicator 3 is related to the findings of Juanday (2025), who pointed out that there is an average to moderate level of awareness and appreciation among senior high school students towards Indigenous people and culture, which revealed that not all aspects of Indigenous education were fairly emphasized in schools. Likewise, Buenafllor et al. (2023) noted that educational policies, instructional, and socio-economic challenges existed, but despite their presence, they still limited students' understanding and insight into Indigenous rights. Therefore, Table 1 revealed that Senior High School students possessed a high level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act. However, the results also indicated that specific aspects, particularly exposure to IPRA through school discussions and awareness of the important role of government agencies, fell within a Moderate to High level of awareness.

Table 2 reveals that senior high school students showed a high level of participation in community extension activities related to Indigenous Peoples, particularly in donations, as indicated by a composite mean of 3.43, classified as high. This implies that the respondents actively participated in donation initiatives that supported Indigenous communities. Among the indicators, Indicator 5, which stated, "I believe that educating the public about Indigenous Peoples will encourage more donations," recorded the highest weighted mean of 3.57, which was classified as high. The high level of participation is supported by Bamba et al. (2021), who argued that donation initiatives are essential for maintaining educational and social support for Indigenous communities. This participation advocated the importance of donation as a form of community participation. The study of Capacia et al. (2023) highlighted that one of the essential forms of participation was donations and sponsorships, specifically at the Mangyan Education Center (MEC). This study provided evidence to support educational programs that empowered Indigenous students. Conversely, Indicator 2, which expresses that "I participate in donation drives organized by the school or student organizations," obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.28, which was still

interpreted as high. This indicated that while students did participate in donation programs, their involvement in formally organized donation drives was less frequent than their personal attitudes and willingness to give. However, the comparatively lower weighted mean of participation in donation initiatives agreed with research identifying systemic barriers that restrict students from donating to Indigenous causes. McEwen et al. (2023) found that, despite some individuals' motivation to advocate for Indigenous initiatives, many potential donors were constrained or reserved, highlighting attitudinal and structural barriers that reduced actual giving. This explained why some indicators, although rated highly, fell under lower-weighted means. Furthermore, it showed that Senior High School students had a high extent of participation in donation-related community extension programs for Indigenous Peoples. This indicated that students were actively involved in initiatives to support Indigenous communities.

**Table 2**  
*Mean Level of Participation in Community Extension Programs Related to Indigenous People in terms of Donation, Gift-giving, and Outreach Program*

Indicators (Donation)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Descriptions
I have donated financial goods or other forms of support to programs that benefit Indigenous communities.	3.34	High
I participate in donation drives organized by the school or student organizations.	3.28	High
I am willing to continue donating to support Indigenous Peoples in the future.	3.45	High
I believe donations can make a positive impact on the lives of Indigenous People.	3.52	High
Educating the public about Indigenous People will encourage more donations.	3.57	High
Composite Mean	3.43	High
Indicators (Gift-giving)		
I have participated in gift-giving activities for Indigenous communities.	3.28	High
I see gift-giving as a meaningful way of supporting Indigenous Peoples.	3.22	Moderate High
I am motivated to join future gift-giving events for Indigenous communities.	3.42	High
I am willing to give gifts to Indigenous People if I have the resources.	3.17	Moderate High
I will encourage others to participate in gift-giving activities for Indigenous People.	3.41	High
Composite Mean	3.30	High
Indicators (Outreach Programs)		
I am willing to provide funding or resources for outreach programs that support Indigenous People.	3.31	High
I actively participate in our school's community extension activities.	3.47	High
I believe outreach programs help strengthen my awareness of Indigenous Peoples	3.35	High
I have joined outreach programs for Indigenous communities.	3.51	High
I consider outreach programs to be important in promoting equality and social justice for Indigenous Peoples	3.47	High
Composite Mean	3.42	High
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>High</b>

Legend: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

Regarding gift-giving, the results indicated that respondents had a high level of participation in community extension activities related to Indigenous Peoples, as evidenced by a composite mean of 3.30, which was classified as high. This suggests that students commonly participated in gift-giving activities and recognized their importance as a means of supporting Indigenous communities. Among the indicators, indicator 3, which stated, "I am motivated to join future gift-giving events for Indigenous communities," recorded the highest weighted mean of 3.42 and was interpreted as high. These results suggested that students were highly motivated to continue participating in gift-giving activities for Indigenous Peoples. The high level of participation in gift-giving is supported by Lanoue (2023), who emphasized that advocating for Indigenous Peoples through gift-giving has traditionally been prominent in Indigenous communities, reflecting consideration, mutuality, and shared support. Across the Philippines, gift-giving has also been integrated into community extension initiatives to enhance social engagement and cultural awareness. Project PEARLS (2019) embodied this practice by conducting Christmas season gift-giving initiatives in Capas, Tarlac, benefiting Indigenous tribes and strengthening community connections.

In contrast, Indicator 4, which expressed "I am willing to give gifts to Indigenous People if I have the resources," had the lowest weighted mean of 3.17, classified as Moderate High. This indicated that despite the

willingness to participate in gift-giving, their level of participation may have been influenced by the availability of personal resources. Although gift-giving initiatives were often viewed as positive expressions of support for marginalized groups, participation was not always consistent with individuals' intentions. White et al. (2023) explained this gap using the Theory of Planned Behavior, noting that favorable attitudes toward charitable giving did not automatically translate into participation. Their systematic review and meta-analysis revealed that factors such as perceived behavioral control, social norms, and situational constraints significantly affected individuals' participation in giving initiatives. This suggests that even when people were willing to support causes such as Indigenous Peoples, their participation in gift-giving initiatives could have been hindered by limited resources, a lack of available opportunities, or weak social encouragement. Therefore, the extent of students' participation in community extension activities related to Indigenous Peoples, particularly gift-giving, was great. The implications indicated strong motivation among students to participate in the gift-giving program, although resource-related factors may moderately influence the extent of their participation. In terms of outreach programs, the findings revealed a High level of participation, as evidenced by the composite mean of 3.42, which was determined as High. Among the indicators, Indicator 4, which stated, "I have joined outreach programs for Indigenous communities," obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.51, which is considered high. This illustrated that students had experience and participated in outreach programs. The high level of participation observed in this study was supported by Aldave et al. (2025), who noted that outreach programs, such as the Mangyan Education Center of Divine Word College of San Jose, provided students with significant opportunities to engage in community extension activities. Similarly, Capacia et al. (2023) emphasized that the root of students' consistent participation lay in sustainable outreach programs, even amid hindrances arising from changing educational contexts.

On the other hand, Indicator 1, which asked "I am willing to donate money or resources for outreach programs supporting Indigenous People," had the lowest weighted mean of 3.31, although it was still considered high. This indicated that while students were willing to participate in outreach programs, actual contribution of financial or material resources may be affected by personal resources and availability. Despite the recognized value of outreach programs for Indigenous Peoples, Snelgrove et al. (2014) noted that, even with outreach and solidarity initiatives with Indigenous communities, engagement and participation appeared limited due to cultural distance and a lack of understanding of Indigenous realities. As a result, the extent of Senior High School students' participation in community extension activities, particularly outreach programs, was high. Students showed involvement and participation, particularly in outreach activities, although resource-based participation was comparatively lower but still positive.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Paths	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size	Critical Value	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Students' Level of Awareness → Participation in Community Extension Programs	1.365	0.390	1.994	17.515	0.000	Significant

p-value < 0.05 Significant

Table 3 presents the relationship between students' level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) and their extent of participation in community extension programs. The results indicated a strong positive correlation, as evidenced by an effect size ( $r^2$ ) of 0.390, implying that their level of awareness of IPRA can explain 39% of the variation in students' participation. Furthermore, the computed t-value (7.515) was greater than the critical value (1.994), and the p-value (0.000) was lower than the 0.05 level of significance. This confirmed that the relationship between awareness and participation is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Students with greater awareness of IPRA tended to participate more in community extension programs related to Indigenous Peoples. The significant relationship determined in this study was supported by Celio et al. (2017), who discovered that students' awareness and understanding of social issues significantly influenced their participation in community service and extension activities. Their study emphasized that knowledgeable students were more likely to translate knowledge into active community participation. Similarly, Bowman et al. (2017)

reported that students' moral and social awareness was positively connected with sustained involvement in community and service-oriented programs. Their findings pointed out that awareness fostered responsibility that motivated long-term participation.

In addition, Yorio and Ye (2018) demonstrated that, in service-learning, awareness can be increased and positively strengthened. This affected students' civic, social, and participatory behaviors. At the same time, this strengthened the belief that awareness catalyzed meaningful participation in community extension programs. Therefore, the implications revealed a strong, statistically significant relationship between students' level of awareness of IPRA and their level of participation in community extension activities. Students' awareness significantly influenced their participation in community extension programs, explaining 39% of participation and confirming that increased knowledge of Indigenous rights was a positive factor in promoting active participation in programs that supported Indigenous Peoples.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. The results showed that Senior High School students at Divine Word College of San Jose had a high level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997. The study showed that, in community extension programs related to Indigenous peoples, students actively participated in donation activities and believed that donations could positively improve the lives of Indigenous peoples. In terms of gift-giving, students demonstrated motivation to participate in gift-giving activities for Indigenous peoples. In terms of outreach programs, students actively joined programs implemented and organized by the school. The findings revealed a significant relationship between students' level of awareness of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 and their participation in community extension programs related to Indigenous Peoples.

**Recommendations** - Based on the study's significant findings and conclusions, the following recommendation was presented: School administrators may support the integration of Indigenous Peoples' rights into school programs and activities by providing platforms and resources for teachers and students to organize discussions, class projects, advocacy campaigns, and awareness activities. They may also recognize student participation in these initiatives through awards, certificates, or announcements, and coordinate with local Indigenous communities or NGOs to offer meaningful opportunities for engagement. Teachers may integrate discussions and learning activities regarding the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) and Indigenous Peoples' rights into existing school programs and lessons. This can include using Values Education or core values lessons to discuss integrity, service, and competence; incorporating current events or social issues related to Indigenous peoples; guiding students in class projects or advocacy campaigns, such as posters and presentations; or organizing short talks and awareness programs. School administrators and community extension programs may encourage students to participate in community extension programs, such as donation, gift-giving, outreach programs, or forums and seminars with Indigenous Peoples, by providing platforms and resources to plan and implement activities during school events and club meetings; facilitating partnerships with local Indigenous communities or NGOs to ensure valuable participation; and offering mentorship, guidance, and feedback to ensure student initiatives are organized effectively and are culturally respectful. Lastly, future researchers may conduct similar studies with larger populations or across different educational institutions to validate and expand this study's findings. Future researchers who intend to conduct similar studies may explore other factors that influence students' participation in community extension programs related to Indigenous peoples.

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# Usage of cyber slang and its influence on the writing proficiency of junior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose

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## Abstract

As social communication continues to influence language use among students, many studies have shown the negative impact of slang use on writing proficiency. This study was conducted to identify the relationship between the usage of cyber slang and the writing proficiency of junior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. The researchers used a descriptive-correlational research design, with 207 students as the study's respondents. The methods for collecting the important data require obtaining permission from the school administration and disseminating structured questionnaires to selected respondents. The study investigates the use of cyber slang, including acronyms and abbreviations, alphanumeric slang, shortened words, and internet phrases. Writing proficiency was evaluated in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. The study revealed that both usage of cyber slang and writing proficiency were at a moderate-high level. A significant but very weak relationship was found between demographic profile and writing proficiency. Nevertheless, it was found that there is no significant relationship between the usage of cyber slang and writing proficiency. The results suggest that although students often use cyber slang in online communication, it does not significantly influence their academic writing proficiency. This study recommends that the school observe and evaluate writing development across grade levels to ensure that students' writing skills continually improve as they develop academically. Lastly, future researchers must investigate other factors that could affect writing proficiency to obtain a wider understanding of students' writing development.

**Keywords:** cyber slang usage, writing proficiency, academic writing, writing development, alphanumeric slang

## Usage of cyber slang and its influence on the writing proficiency of junior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose

### 1. Introduction

Cyber slang is a kind of informal language used online, and it has become a popular way for the young generation to express themselves. Most students now spend a lot of time interacting online, where informal language and cyber slang are commonly used. As supported by Dimacangun and Guillena (2023) in the *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies* published by the Institute of Industry and Academic Research Incorporated, usage of social media among junior high school students in the Philippines is high and has become an essential part of their communication and studying experiences, reflecting the high frequency of usage of social media in the Philippines. As they participate more frequently in online conversations, it becomes important to explore whether this online behavior carries over into the academic setting, especially in their formal writing. However, the use of shortened words and abbreviations helps users communicate quickly and express their emotions more easily. In online communication, where there are no visual or vocal cues, emoticons or emojis serve as helpful replacements for nonverbal signals, helping users express their emotions. Students are likely to forget the correct usage of cyber slang because they use their phones daily, which often leads to its inappropriate use in academic writing. Hamidah's (2020) work showed that excessive exposure to informal language, including slang, can lead to a decline in standard-language grammar and writing skills.

As social communication continues to influence language use among students, many studies have shown the negative impact of slang use on writing proficiency. Furthermore, a study by Putri Paino et al. (2024) reveals that over 80% of frequent slang users had problems with formal writing, and 65% had difficulty, particularly with writing structured essays. Although several international studies have been conducted, there is limited research on the localized experiences of junior high school students in the Philippines with academic writing, including grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. This gap shows the importance of conducting a study at Divine Word College of San Jose to know the connection between informal language practices and academic writing development in a localized context. This study may also help individuals better understand how the use of cyber slang influences students' writing proficiency. This study sought to determine how cyber slang influenced the students' writing proficiency. The findings helped determine whether frequent exposure to cyber slang contributed to difficulties in academic writing or helped students express ideas more freely. The results of the study primarily benefited Junior High School students by increasing their awareness of appropriate language used in formal and informal contexts. Teachers and school administrators also benefited from the findings, as these served as a basis for improving instructional strategies and language policies. At the same time, future researchers may use the study as a reference for related research on digital language use and writing proficiency.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study sought to determine the influence of cyber slang on the writing proficiency of Junior High School students of Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What is the profile of the students in terms of age and grade levels? (2) What is the level of cyber slang usage of Junior High School students in terms of acronyms and abbreviations, alphanumeric slang, shortened words, and Internet phrases? (3) What is the level of writing proficiency of Junior High School students in terms of spelling and grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary? (4) Is the level of academic writing proficiency of Junior High School significantly affected by the profile of the students and cyber slang usage?

**Significance of the Study** - This study is important, as it sought to determine the influence of cyber slang on writing proficiency. Primarily, this study will help raise students' awareness of how frequent use of cyber slang can negatively affect their academic performance. Second, it will help students develop language discipline and learn to distinguish between informal and formal language use. Third, it will provide language teachers with

insights to help them address language-related issues and strengthen their teaching strategies for students' formal writing. Fourth, this study will help parents understand how their children's online habits affect their academic performance, enabling them to provide better guidance at home. Fifth, this study will help the community by spreading awareness of how the use of cyber slang can affect students' academic writing proficiency. This research can encourage community organizations to develop programs on cyber slang focused on teaching youth about the responsible and appropriate use of language, both online and offline. Lastly, this study will serve as a valuable reference for researchers interested in examining the impact of cyber slang on academic writing skills. Additionally, it may facilitate further research into areas such as online behavior, the utilization of digital language, or the effect of social media on academic communication.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This research employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship between students' use of slang and their writing proficiency. The descriptive design was used to determine the profile of the students in terms of sex, age, and grade level; it also determined the level of cyber slang usage and the academic writing proficiency of the Junior High School students. Moreover, a correlational design was used to test the relationship between the use of cyber slang and the writing proficiency of Junior High School students.

**Respondents of the Study** - The researchers obtained authorization from the administration of Divine Word College of San Jose to conduct the study involving Junior High School students enrolled in the school year 2025–2026. The number of Junior High School students was included in the study's sampling frame. Following the calculation of the sample size, stratified random sampling will be used to select participants. Stratified random sampling is suitable, as it reduces the risk of bias in respondent selection and ensures that the results accurately reflect the performance of the entire junior high school population. Even though stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation from each grade level, the final sample size per grade level was determined by the students who were present and willing to participate during data collection. The overall population of the Junior High School is 446, coming from 4 grade levels, grade 7 to grade 10, and the researchers utilized the Raosoft sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50% population proportion to determine the required sample size of 207 respondents. Thus, there were 44 from grade 7, 60 from grade 8, 43 from grade 9, and 60 from grade 10.

**Research Instrument** - The research instrument that was used in this study was a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire involved two parts: the profile of the respondents and the cyber slang in four aspects (the acronyms and abbreviations, alphanumeric slang, shortened words, and internet phrases) and the academic writing proficiency in four aspects: the spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. The first part of the survey questionnaire assessed respondents' profiles in terms of age, sex, and grade level. The second part of the study used a quantitative research method, consisting of a questionnaire. This part of the survey questionnaire consisted of 40 questions, with 5 questions each. In responding to this part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate each statement by checking the box that corresponded to their level of agreement, using the scale: 4-Strongly agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - To gather quantitative data to determine how cyber slang influences the writing proficiency of the students, researchers sent two (2) request letters, one for the school principal and the other for the department coordinator of junior high school, to allow the researcher to survey each section of the Junior High School Department of Divine Word College of San Jose to secure approval. Both the basic education principal and the junior high school coordinator approved the request letter and granted the researcher permission to conduct a student survey. Following approval, researcher-made questionnaires were distributed to the junior high school department at Divine Word College of San Jose. All surveys were collected after one (1) day, and the data were organized and prepared for analysis to yield meaningful insights.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze all the data

collected in the study. Descriptive Statistics: Frequency and percentage were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile, including gender, grade level, and age. A weighted mean was used to determine the extent to which students used cyber slang in their daily online communication and to assess their writing proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. To test the relationship between the use of cyber slang and students' writing proficiency, Pearson's *r* was used. This statistical tool assessed whether the use of cyber slang had a significant effect on students' grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. All statistical analyses were performed using Excel to ensure the accuracy and reliability of all results.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researcher ensured that all ethical guidelines for conducting academic research were followed throughout the study. The researchers obtained permission from both the research adviser and the school administration before collecting data. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents retained the right to refuse or withdraw at any point without incurring any penalties or repercussions. To uphold confidentiality and anonymity, participants were not obligated to disclose their names or any identifying details. All data collected was confidential and utilized exclusively for academic purposes.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Frequency and Percent Distribution of Students' Profiles in Terms of Age and Sex*

Age	Frequency	Percent
12-13 years old	73	35.27%
14-15 years old	107	51.69%
16 and above	27	13.04%
Total	207	100%
Grade Level		
7	44	21.26%
8	60	28.99%
9	43	20.77%
10	60	28.99%
Total	207	100%

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distributions of respondents by age and sex. Among 207 student respondents, the largest proportion is in the 14–15-year-old age group, with 107 respondents, accounting for 51.69% of the total. This shows that more than half are within this age range, suggesting that most students are in middle adolescence, a stage often associated with significant academic and cognitive development. Students aged 12–13 years, with 73 respondents (35.27%), are the second-largest group. This shows that a considerable number of respondents are in early adolescence, a crucial stage in shaping their behaviors, social interactions, and academic performance. Furthermore, students aged 16 and above account for 27 respondents (13.04%), the smallest proportion among the listed age categories. The table above shows that, according to Alias & Razak (2023), younger, socially active individuals primarily understand slang. In contrast, older generations may struggle due to differences in age, environment, and academic background. Similarly, Yadav & Rai (2017) explained that anyone born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s grew up with global access to digital platforms. As students from junior high school belong to this generation, their constant engagement with online communication increases their exposure to cyber slang, which may affect their writing habits and proficiency.

Across the 207 student respondents, 8th- and 10th-grade students had the highest numbers, with 60 respondents each, representing 28.99% of the total per grade level. This shows that these two grade levels have the largest representation in the study. On the other hand, 7th grade has 44 respondents (21.26%), while 9th grade has 43 respondents (20.77%); both represent slightly smaller proportions of the sample. The distribution shows that all four junior high school grade levels are adequately represented, with no single grade level dominating the group. The representation among grade levels is significant, as previous studies have highlighted the role of grade level in students' language development and writing proficiency. In the study by Ricaforte (2022), the author found that junior high school students' exposure to cyber slang negatively affects their use of spelling, punctuation, and grammar, suggesting that students' academic writing skills may be affected by exposure to informal language

across grade levels.

Additionally, Gonzalvo et al. (2020) show that students who are regularly exposed to internet slang tend to encompass informal language into their communication, which may affect the formality of their academic writing. Furthermore, Hikmah et al. (2019) reported that Grade 8 students commonly make grammatical errors, highlighting that writing challenges vary across grade levels and that students encounter different language difficulties as they progress in junior high school. These results support the inclusion of grade level as an important variable in the present study, as differences in students' exposure to cyber slang and writing proficiency may be influenced by their academic and developmental levels.

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of Cyber Slang Usage of Junior High School Students in terms of Acronyms and Abbreviations, Alphanumeric Slang, Shortened Words, and Internet Phrases*

Indicators (Acronyms and Abbreviations)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I use acronyms (e.g., "LOL," "BRB") when messaging online.	3.17	Moderate High
2. I use acronyms to make my conversations faster and easier.	3.40	High
3. I identify some abbreviations used by others.	3.16	Moderate high
4. I'm using abbreviations instead of writing full words.	3.08	Moderate High
5. The use of acronyms & abbreviations affects how I write in formal settings (e.g., school).	2.67	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.10	Moderate High
Indicators (Alphanumeric slang)		
1. I use alphanumeric slang (e.g., "w8" for wait, "l8r" for later) when chatting with someone.	2.43	Moderate Low
2. When typing messages, alphanumeric slang saves me time.	2.75	Moderate High
3. I sometimes misunderstand alphanumeric slang used by others.	3.09	Moderate Low
4. I believe alphanumeric slang is only appropriate for informal settings.	3.03	Moderate Low
5. I use alphanumeric slang in my spelling in school/work writing.	1.97	Moderate Low
Composite Mean	2.65	moderate high
Indicators (Shortened words)		
1. I usually use shortened words (e.g., "pls" for please, "u" for you) when chatting online.	3.58	High
2. Shortened words make messages more convenient.	3.39	High
3. I encounter confusion when others use shortened words excessively.	2.92	Moderate High
4. I believe shortened words reduce the quality of communication.	2.75	Moderate High
5. Using shortened words affects how I spell in formal writing.	2.64	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.06	Moderate High
Indicators (Internet phrases)		
1. I use internet phrases (e.g., "slay," "it's giving," "no cap") in conversations.	2.84	Moderate High
2. Internet phrases help me express myself better.	3.01	Moderate High
3. I sometimes struggle to keep up with new internet phrases.	2.90	Moderate High
4. Internet phrases influence how young people communicate daily.	3.35	High
5. I avoid using internet phrases in academic or professional writing.	3.12	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.04	Moderate High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

Table 2 shows the mean levels of cyber slang usage among junior high school students across acronyms and abbreviations, alphanumeric slang, shortened words, and internet phrases. The usage of acronyms and abbreviations among Junior High School students at Divine Word College of San Jose has a composite mean of 3.10, which is verbally described as "moderate high." The highest mean, 3.40 (High), was observed for Indicator 2, indicating that students mostly use these shortcuts to make digital conversations easier and more efficient. In contrast, the lowest mean of 2.67 (moderately high) in Indicator 5 suggests a lingering concern that these habits may affect formal school writing. Students show that their use of acronyms and abbreviations resulted in a moderate-high level, especially to make conversations more fast and easy. This shows that these forms of cyber slang are frequently used in casual digital communication. These findings are consistent with the study by Ahmad et al. (2022), who noted that the drive for conciseness and speed in social media communication often leads to the

normalization of such word forms among youth. However, Xursanovna (2025) highlights that while these abbreviations facilitate fast, direct exchange, they risk creating a linguistic disconnect when students are required to return to the rigid structures of formal academic writing.

Furthermore, in terms of academic writing, the result stating that the usage of acronyms and abbreviations affects formal writing received a high mean score of 2.67, suggesting that students recognize a possible influence of cyber slang on their academic writing. The usage of alphanumeric slang among students is at moderate level, with a few indicators showing moderate-low use. This recommends that even though students are familiar with it, alphanumeric slang is less used in their everyday messaging habits. This insight is supported by Umurzakova (2025), who observed that while slang and abbreviations enhance efficiency in online communication, their constant use may pose challenges when transferring informal language patterns into academic writing. Supported by the current literature, these results suggest that while acronyms and abbreviations are a natural part of students' online communication, awareness and proper guidance are important to ensure that such informal language does not negatively affect students' formal writing proficiency.

Moreover, in terms of alphanumeric slang usage, the respondents are also at a "Moderate High" level, with a composite mean of 2.65. Notably, the highest-rated item (Indicator 3, mean of 3.09) refers to students occasionally being confused by the alphanumeric slang used by others, indicating that not everyone, even among young users, always understands it. Furthermore, the very low mean of 1.97 for Indicator 5 suggests that students generally avoid using terms in their formal schoolwork, treating it strictly, as these terms are primarily suited for informal digital spaces. This behavior aligns with the views of Kulkarni and Wang (2017), who argue that alphanumeric slang is a specialized linguistic adaptation born from the constraints of digital platforms, serving as a tool for social belonging and efficiency. Nevertheless, Putri Paino et al. (2024) argue that constant exposure to these non-academic writing styles can still create problems for students, as students may reduce the quality of their formal academic writing, thereby affecting their academic performance. Overall, the results suggest that junior high school students exhibit a moderate level of alphanumeric slang use, primarily in informal communication. Consistent with the related literature, the results show that although students are familiar with the convenience of alphanumeric slang, they are generally aware of its use and well informed about its limited appropriateness in formal academic writing. This awareness may help reduce its possible negative effect on students' writing proficiency.

Regarding shortened words, the data show a composite mean of 3.06, which is interpreted as "moderately high." This result indicates that students frequently use shortened words and other abbreviations in their online communication. Indicators 1 and 2 received high verbal descriptions, suggesting that shortened words are commonly used for the convenience and efficiency of communication on online platforms. Student's use of shortened words resulted in a high to moderate-high level, finding them accessible for faster messaging. This suggests that shortened words are a chosen form of cyber slang in their online communications. This result is supported by the study by Ahmad et al. (2022), which reports that students tend to use shortened words to improve efficiency and speed in online messaging. Similarly, Hutauruk et al. (2024) explained that the rapid growth of social media use has normalized the use of shortened words among younger users, making it a common feature of their everyday communication. These studies understood that constant exposure to shortened words may affect students' writing practice, especially when distinguishing between informal and formal writing contexts. In the end, the findings show that students commonly use shortened words for convenience in online communication. A study's results suggest that, although shortened words are widely used in informal settings, students recognize that overuse of them may affect spelling in their academic writing.

Lastly, in terms of internet phrases, receiving a 3.04 composite mean is verbally analyzed as "moderately high." This shows that students commonly use internet phrases that are popular in their online interactions. Indicator 4 revealed a composite mean of 3.04, a "High" verbal illustration, suggesting that internet phrases greatly influence how students communicate in their daily lives. The student's use of internet phrases resulted from moderate-high to high, showing that these expressions help them express meaning and keep up with trends. However, students tend to avoid these phrases in academic or professional writing, showing a distinction between

informal and formal contexts. This result is supported by Vacalares et al. (2023), who found that internet phrases serve as a form of digital language among Generation Z, shaping how young people express intentions and emotions online. In addition, Villarroel (2025) highlights that internet phrases have become deeply ingrained in everyday communication and are no longer limited to informal settings. These findings suggest that while internet phrases enhance expression and social interaction, extreme use may blur the boundary between informal online communication and academic writing.

**Table 3**

*Mean Level of Writing Proficiency of Junior High School Students in terms of Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation, and Vocabulary*

Indicators (Spelling)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I pay attention to correct spelling when sending online messages.	3.32	High
2. Spelling errors affect the clarity of a message.	3.39	High
3. I often overlook spelling mistakes when chatting casually.	3.25	High
4. I use autocorrect or predictive text to fix spelling errors.	3.10	Moderate High
5. Frequent use of shortcuts online has affected my spelling in formal writing.	2.72	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.16	Moderate High
Indicators (Grammar)		
1. I use proper grammar when communicating online.	3.23	Moderate High
2. I believe grammar is important for clear communication.	3.54	High
3. I often ignore grammar rules when chatting informally.	2.65	Moderate High
4. Using incorrect grammar online affects how I write in formal situations.	2.67	Moderate High
5. I feel judged when I make grammatical mistakes in messages.	2.99	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.02	Moderate High
Indicators (Punctuation)		
1. I use punctuation marks correctly when writing messages.	3.09	Moderate High
2. Lack of punctuation makes messages harder to understand.	2.93	Moderate High
3. I often ignore punctuation in casual chats.	2.73	Moderate High
4. Excessive use of punctuation (e.g., "!!!!") is common in my online communication.	2.93	Moderate High
5. Using improper punctuation affects my writing in school.	2.76	Moderate High
Composite Mean	2.89	Moderate High
Indicators (Vocabulary)		
1. I learn new vocabulary through online communication.	3.54	High
2. Internet slang has expanded my vocabulary.	3.28	High
3. I sometimes replace formal words with slang in my writing.	2.70	Moderate High
4. Online communication has improved my vocabulary knowledge.	3.32	High
5. Overuse of slang affects my vocabulary in academic settings.	2.64	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.10	Moderate High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

Table 3 presents the mean levels of writing proficiency among junior high school students in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. Despite the 3.16 composite mean noted in Table 5—often labelled "moderate high"—spelling ability among junior high school students remains unequal. Written expression generally reflects reliable letter usage, though errors appear under time pressure. Performance reached high levels in everyday vocabulary, core word forms, and common beginning segments. Still, consistency falters when speed becomes a factor. A pattern emerges when familiar settings show up during reading practice. Yet, scores of 4 and 5 fall within the moderate-to-high range, indicating that exposure to internet-based language may subtly influence spelling performance in academic writing. Student's attention to correct spelling resulted in a moderate-high level, particularly when clarity is important. Common use of shortened words online, however, has affected their proper writing spelling slightly. This aligns with Ehri (2020), in which misspelled words create issues for clear expression and scoring. From another angle, Ricaforte (2022) observed that informal web language weakens recall of correct spelling during formal tasks. Though subtle, digital habits reshape written accuracy over time.

Moreover, in terms of grammar, the composite mean of 3.02 indicates that junior high school students' grammar skills are classified as moderately high. Still, structural mistakes are evident across student work, even

with this result. Although understanding the role of grammar achieved a high classification, most aspects remain at a moderately high level. Because of this pattern, rule usage shifts when applied to a structured form. The student's use of proper grammar online resulted in a moderate-high level, with students familiarizing its importance for proper communication. Causal online communication sometimes leads them to ignore grammar rules, though this has little impact on formal writing. The overall result reflects limited mastery rather than full consistency in practice. Where one point reached a higher evaluation, others trailed behind under similar conditions. Thus, performance remains uneven, though not entirely insufficient, across measures shown. This finding aligns with the work of Rusmiati (2019), who states that a strong knowledge of grammar is needed to create quality written work. Despite this, studies have found that most of the time, students translate informal habits from online communication into formal writing. In the Philippines, grammatical challenges among students are also noticeable. This aligns with the current finding that, while students show moderately high proficiency, gaps remain in the consistent application of grammar rules across situations. To address these issues, Fitrawati and Safitri (2021) suggested educational strategies such as group study, writing class, and targeted grammar lessons, while Manirakiza et al. (2021) highlighted the use of actual materials, technology, positive feedback, and motivation-enhancing techniques to reduce mistakes related to grammar and to strengthen writing skills.

Moreover, junior high school students' writing proficiency in punctuation is examined. The table shows students' responses among five indicators related to the right use of punctuation in casual and formal writing. The results show a composite mean of 2.89, classified as Moderate High, indicating that students are familiar with the importance of punctuation but may not apply it consistently, especially in informal settings. Student's use of punctuation shows moderate-high proficiency, analyzing that correct use helps message clarity. Furthermore, informal online communication and too much use of punctuation slightly affect their writing in formal contexts. Punctuation plays a significant role in both writing and reading comprehension. Dolean and Prodan (2023) highlight that punctuation marks help readers analyze sentence structure and the clarity of narration and direct speech. Similarly, MacKay et al. (2021) noted that awareness of punctuation supports reading comprehension and overall language development. Despite its importance, research on students' use of punctuation remains limited. Grünke and Coepicus (2017) found that selected educational interventions enhance students' proper use of punctuation in writing performance, while Tavşanlı and Kara (2021) revealed that group and self-assessment activities significantly enhanced students' sticking to the rules of punctuation and spelling. Based on the results, students agreed that they use punctuation marks properly (weighted mean = 3.09) and that the absence of punctuation makes messages difficult to analyze (weighted mean = 2.93), reflecting their understanding of punctuation's role in the clarity of communication. However, students also reveal that they often disregard punctuation in casual communication (weighted mean = 2.73) and often use too much punctuation online (weighted mean = 2.93). The indicator shows that improper punctuation affects academic writing (weighted mean = 2.76), further suggesting that informal communication may influence it. Overall, the results show that while students understand the importance of punctuation, their practices in online communication may hinder consistent and proper use in formal writing.

Lastly, the table shows the level of writing proficiency in terms of vocabulary of the junior high school students. The results show a composite mean of 3.10, classified as Moderate High, indicating that students specifically recognize online communication as a great help in developing their vocabulary. Among the indicators, "I learn new vocabulary through online communication" got the highest weighted mean with 3.54. Next is "Online communication has improved my vocabulary knowledge," with a weighted mean of 3.32, which was analyzed as high. This suggests that students view online platforms as significant sources of learning vocabulary. However, "Overuse of slang affects my vocabulary in academic writing" recorded the lowest weighted mean with 2.64, showing moderate awareness of the negative effects of excessive slang use on formal vocabulary. The use of vocabulary resulted in a moderate-high to high, with digital communication and exposure to internet slang helping students learn new words. Overdependence on slang somehow hinders their academic vocabulary. Similarly, a study by Konza (2016) emphasized that direct vocabulary instruction helps students analyze word meanings and apply them correctly in context, enabling effective integration into their language use. Based on the result, junior

high school students recognize the positive impact of online communication and internet slang on vocabulary development. Nevertheless, the moderate ratings for changing formal words with slang got a 2.70 weighted mean, and the observed effect of overuse of slang on academic vocabulary got a 2.64 weighted mean, which suggests that too much exposure to informal communication may hinder the proper choice of words in formal writing. Overall, the results show that while online communication supports vocabulary growth, proper guidance is important to help students differentiate between informal and formal vocabulary use.

**Table 4**  
*Path Coefficient and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Paths	Correlation Coefficients	Effect Size	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Writing Proficiency→Profile of the Student	0.105	0.156	2.684	0.009	Not Significant
Writing Proficiency→Cyber Slang Usage	0.026	0.001	6.937	0.711	Significant

Significant at  $P < 0.05$

Table 4 presents the path coefficients, effect sizes, t-values, and p-values for the hypothesis, which assess the relationships among writing proficiency, students' profiles, and the use of cyber slang among junior high school students. The table above shows that there is no significant relationship between students' profiles and writing proficiency ( $r = 0.105$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ). Since the p-value is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted for this part. This shows that variables such as age, sex, and grade level have no significant effect on students' writing proficiency. Based on the effect size, the relationship is relatively weak. Meanwhile, the relationship between cyber slang usage and writing proficiency was revealed to be significant ( $r = 0.026$ ,  $p = 0.711$ ). The high p-value indicates that cyber slang usage has a significant effect on the writing proficiency of junior high school students in this study. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected for this path. Overall, the results imply that students' profiles contribute more to variation in writing proficiency than cyber slang usage does.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn: the demographic profile of the respondents. Most respondents were aged 14 to 15, with male students slightly more numerous than female students, and Grades 8 and 10 had the highest representation among Junior High School students. The level of cyber slang usage among Junior High School students. In terms of acronyms and abbreviations, alphanumeric slang, shortened words, and internet phrases, the students reveal a moderate-to-high level. Among the four types of cyber slang, acronyms and abbreviations were most commonly used, while alphanumeric slang was the least used—the level of writing proficiency of Junior High School students. The students demonstrated a moderately high level of writing proficiency in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. Spelling received the highest rating, while punctuation obtained the lowest rating among the four aspects—the significant relationship between students' profiles and writing proficiency. There is a significant but very weak relationship between students' profiles and writing proficiency. Although scientifically significant, the relationship is weak, indicating that students' profiles have only a modest influence on their writing proficiency. There is a significant relationship between cyber slang usage and writing proficiency. There is no significant relationship between cyber slang usage and writing proficiency. The use of cyber slang does not significantly influence the academic writing proficiency of Junior High School students.

**Recommendations** - In light of the significant findings, the following recommendations are offered. First, school administrators may consider implementing writing development programs for Junior High School students across various age groups and grade levels to develop their writing proficiency further. Second, language teachers may lead students in analyzing the proper use of cyber slang by highlighting the difference between informal online communication and formal academic writing. Third, teachers must conduct additional writing-focused activities, especially on punctuation and grammar, to further develop students' overall writing proficiency. Fourth, the curriculum coordinator may observe and evaluate writing development across grade levels to ensure that

students' writing skills continually improve as they develop academically. Lastly, future researchers may investigate other factors that could affect writing proficiency to obtain a wider understanding of students' writing development.

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# Social media exposure and its correlation with the political perspectives of the students in Divine Word College of San Jose

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## Abstract

The emergence of social media has significantly influenced how youth participate in and engage with discussions of societal and political issues. Thus, it is crucial to develop information-media literacy and digital citizenship guidelines to promote safe and healthy political engagement and participation in the digital space. In this study, the impact of social media on the younger generation's political awareness, participation, and civic involvement was carefully assessed and analyzed. Using a descriptive-correlational design, 200 randomly selected senior high school respondents, aged 16-18 years old, were asked to answer the 30-item self-constructed questionnaire. The data were analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The results revealed that the students spent more time on social media and were exposed to different types of content, which led them to become more aware of political issues. The students' political awareness and exposure to social media did not significantly differ with respect to their age, sex, and grade level. Students from the STEM strand made up the largest group and showed varying levels of exposure to social media. Moreover, the results affirmed the ideas propounded in the digital natives and participatory politics theory regarding social media not only as a source of information but also as a space for identity formation, civic expression, and political engagement of the younger generation. This study recommends that schools promote media and political literacy programs that address the effects of social media exposure on students' political perspectives, taking into account differences in student profiles and online behavior.

**Keywords:** social media exposure, political perspectives, civic involvement, youth participation, senior high school

## **Social media exposure and its correlation with the political perspectives of the students in Divine Word College of San Jose**

### **1. Introduction**

In today's digital environment, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X serve as spaces for political communication, giving young people opportunities to support various causes, participate in discussions, and make informed decisions, including voting in elections. As noted by Raza (2021), social media played a significant role in shaping how the youth engaged with political affairs. At the same time, these platforms spread misinformation, leading to confusion and a limited grasp of important issues. This is especially concerning for young people, since many have shaped their political perspectives based on online content, where biased or inaccurate information has influenced their views without adequate context or verification.

In the Philippines, Malasig (2025) reported that young people are some of the most active users of social media. Drawing from the Digital 2025 report, he adds that from January 2024 to January 2025, internet users in the Philippines grew by 792,000 (0.8%). Filipinos aged 16 and above spent an average of 3 hours and 22 minutes daily on social media, ranking 4th worldwide, and used around 8.36 platforms monthly, placing 2nd globally. These platforms are not only used for entertainment but also to follow the news, express opinions, and take part in political conversations. Social media held a crucial role during election periods, particularly in raising awareness and shaping how young Filipinos developed their political views. This was especially relevant for the upcoming BSKE (Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections) 2026, since the respondents included senior high school students who had reached the voting age of 18 and were thus eligible to participate in the Barangay and SK Elections (Francas, 2025). In addition, a study from Arugay and Baquisal (2022) emphasized that the Philippine national elections demonstrated the strong influence of social media on voter behavior, information sharing, and political engagement among Filipinos. Using several data sources, including a pre-election survey, the study revealed that social media played a central role in generating, sharing, and accessing election-related content. This involvement intensified political polarization while also contributing to voter mobilization both online and offline.

In this regard, the study aimed to determine the relationship between social media exposure and students' political perspectives at Divine Word College of San Jose. This is important because students in semi-rural areas are very active on social media and are often exposed to political content online. When students lack strong media literacy skills, they may form political opinions based on biased or misleading information they encounter on these platforms (Fajardo et al., 2025). As noted by Kops et al. (2025), this can lead to negative effects, including confusion and fear. Over time, these experiences may also result in a loss of interest in public issues and lower participation in political activities. In response to these concerns, the findings of this study were expected to benefit the school community, especially the students, by helping guide initiatives that strengthen media literacy and critical thinking. These efforts can help students develop more informed political views and become more engaged in public issues.

**Statement of the Problem** - The study sought to determine the correlation between social media exposure and students' political perspectives at Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the profile of the students in terms of grade level, academic strand, cluster, and sex? (2) What is the level of social media exposure of the students in terms of time spent, type of content, and type of social media? (3) What is the level of political perspective of the students in terms of knowledge of political topics, expressed political views, and involvement in civic duties and political perspective? (4) Is there a significant correlation between social media exposure and the political perspective of the students?

**Significance of the Study** - The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is a correlation between students' social media use and their political perspectives. It was centered on the students from Divine Word

College of San Jose. To highlight the relevance of this research, it was important to identify who may benefit from its findings. First, the findings of this study can help students gain a better understanding of how social media may influence their political perspectives and reflect on their own beliefs. In addition, the results of this study can help guide students in forming informed opinions through open discussions. Moreover, this study can help school administrators create programs that teach students to fact-check online news and to use social media responsibly and safely. Furthermore, this study can guide policymakers in developing regulations that include media literacy lessons in schools and ensure teachers are trained to help students analyze online content critically. Similarly, in Parents and Guardians, this study will help them become aware of the role social media plays in shaping their children's views and support them. Lastly, for future researchers, this study will serve as a basis for further research on related topics.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study focused on the correlation between social media exposure and students' political perspectives at Divine Word College of San Jose during the 2025-2026 school year. The research was limited to enrolled students across various year levels, academic strands, clusters, and programs who actively used different social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, X, and Instagram. The scope of the study included identifying the types of political content that students were exposed to in social media and how this exposure influenced their knowledge of political topics, expressed political views, involvement in civic duties, and political perspective. The scope of this study was limited to one institution, the Divine Word College of San Jose, and it did not include students from other schools. Furthermore, the study did not aim to measure political correctness, party affiliation, or voting behavior. It also excluded exposure to political content from non-social media sources, such as newspapers, radio, and television.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. A descriptive design was used to determine the profile of students by grade level, academic strand and cluster, sex, and type of social media and to assess their level of social media exposure in terms of time spent, content type, and frequency. It also described the students' political perspectives in terms of knowledge of political topics, their expressed political views, and their involvement in civic duties. The correlational aspect of the design was used to examine the relationship between respondents' profiles and students' political perspectives.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of this study were the students from the senior high school department at Divine Word College of San Jose for the school year 2025-2026. Based on the record provided by the academic coordinator, the total population of the SHS department is 412. The researchers used the Raosoft sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a 50% population proportion to determine a required sample size of 200 respondents. To ensure an equitable and systematic representation of the student body, the researchers employed stratified random sampling by grade level, strand, and sex. This method was chosen to ensure that the data gathered reflected the diverse perspectives of the entire senior high school community at Divine Word College of San Jose, with a balanced distribution between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students.

**Research Instrument** - The self-constructed questionnaire used in this study served as the primary research instrument and was specifically designed to obtain the necessary data. The questionnaire was composed of three parts: the demographic profile of the respondents, the social media exposure in three aspects, such as the time spent, type of content, and type of social media, and the political perspectives of students in three aspects, which include their knowledge of political topics, expressed political views, and involvement in civic duties. The first part of the questionnaire addressed the demographic profile of the respondents, including their age, sex, and academic strand and cluster. This information was important for providing background details and categorizing the respondents into meaningful groups for comparative analysis. The second part focused on the respondents' social media exposure, which was examined in terms of the average number of hours they spent on social media daily, the type of content they usually accessed, such as news, entertainment, education, or political updates, and

the type of social media they were using, including Instagram, X, TikTok, and Facebook, since these factors collectively revealed the extent and nature of their social media engagement. The third part was centered on the political perspectives of the students, which were measured in terms of their knowledge of political topics that assessed their awareness of issues and policies, their expressed political views, which determined how openly they shared their opinions either online or offline, and their involvement in civic duties, which reflected their participation in political and social activities such as voting, discussions, or advocacy. The part of the questionnaire is composed of thirty (30) questions. In responding to this part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate each statement by checking the box corresponding to their level of agreement on a 4-point scale: 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The researchers sent letters to the institution's principal and coordinators. The purpose of these letters was to request permission to include senior high school students as respondents. After this, the researchers worked with the teachers and advisers to set the schedule for distributing and collecting the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to the students under the supervision of their advisers to ensure the process was organized and conducted properly. Before answering, the study's purpose was clearly explained to the respondents. They were also told that joining the study was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. These steps were followed to maintain ethical standards and protect the reliability of the collected data. It took 2 days to complete the data-gathering procedure.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the profile of the respondents by grade level, academic strand, cluster, and sex. In addition, weighted means were used to analyze students' level of social media exposure in terms of time spent, type of content, and frequency, as well as their political perspective in terms of knowledge of political topics, expressed political views, and involvement in civic duties. Moreover, to determine the relationship between the students' social media exposure and their political perspective, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed. The respondents' profiles were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution. Weighted means were computed to describe the levels of social media exposure and political perspectives.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researchers strictly adhered to ethical standards in conducting the study, following the principles of the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition. Permission was obtained from the administration of Divine Word College of San Jose prior to data collection. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to all respondents, and their participation was voluntary. No names were required in the questionnaire to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. All data collected were treated with honesty and used solely for academic purposes. Throughout the process, the researchers showed respect and maintained professionalism toward all participants.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**  
*Frequency and Percent Distribution of Students' Profiles by Grade Level & Academic Strand, and Cluster*

	Grade level	Frequency	Percentage
Grade 11		95	47.50%
Grade 12		103	51.50%
Total		200	100%
Strand/Cluster			
STEM		121	60.5%
HUMSS/ASSH		38	20.5%
ABM/BAE		41	19.0%
Total		200	100%
Sex			
Male		68	34%
Female		98	49%
Prefer not to say		34	17%
Total		200	100%

The distribution of the respondents' grade level is presented in Table 1. Of the 200 respondents, Grade 12 respondents had the highest frequency, at 103 (51.50%). On the other hand, Grade 11 students comprise 95, or 47.50%, of the total population. The data indicate a nearly equal distribution across the two grade levels, with Grade 12 students slightly more represented. This suggests that the study collected comprehensive feedback from the senior high school student body at Divine Word College of San Jose, ensuring that both year levels are well represented in the data. In addition, of the 200 respondents, those from the STEM strand constitute the largest group, with a frequency of 121, accounting for 60.5% of the population. This is followed by the ABM/BAE cluster with 41 (20.5%), while the HUMSS/ASSH cluster has the lowest frequency, with 38 (19%). The data suggest that the study is predominantly composed of students from the STEM strand, though there is a fair distribution across other academic clusters. This variety of academic backgrounds is significant for analyzing how students consume information, as supported by Stechler et al. (2025). They emphasize that social media has become a primary platform for political engagement among youth, regardless of their specific field of study. According to their findings, the increased time students spend online across these strands directly facilitates greater access to political information and civic discourse. This suggests that academic strands do not limit a student's exposure to political content, as digital platforms provide a universal space for developing political perspectives. Moreover, the distribution of respondents by academic sex is presented in Table 1. Of the total respondents, 68 (34%) are male, and 98 (49%) are female. The remaining 34 respondents, representing 17%, chose "Prefer not to say" regarding their sex. The results indicate that female respondents comprise a larger proportion of the sample. This suggests that the study had greater female participation, which may influence the overall perspectives reflected in the research findings.

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of Social Media Exposure of the students in terms of Time Spent, Type of Content, and Type of Social Media*

Indicators (Time spent)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I spend several hours daily browsing social media.	3.59	High
2. Social media is part of my everyday routine.	3.67	High
3. I use social media longer during weekends or free time.	3.62	High
4. I sometimes sacrifice sleep or study time just to stay active on social media.	3.05	Moderate High
5. The amount of time I spend on social media affects my productivity.	3.31	High
Composite Mean	3.45	High
Indicators (Type of content)		
1. I frequently watch or engage with entertainment-related content on social media.	3.57	High
2. I often use social media to access educational content.	3.39	High
3. I keep myself updated with news through social media.	3.25	High
4. I view or engage with political content online.	3.12	Moderate High
5. I prefer lifestyle, fashion, or leisure content when browsing social media.	3.49	High
Composite Mean	3.36	High
Indicators (Type of Social media)		
1. I frequently use Facebook to read or share information and news updates.	3.08	Moderate High
2. I use TikTok or Instagram mainly for entertainment and trends.	3.58	High
3. I use X (formerly Twitter) to express opinions or read about social and political issues.	2.45	Moderate Low
4. I watch YouTube videos that discuss current or political events.	2.88	Moderate High
5. I prefer social media platforms that allow me to express my thoughts and opinions freely.	3.3	High
Composite Mean	3.06	Moderate High
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>High</b>

Scale: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

Students in Divine Word College of San Jose were asked to know their level of social media exposure in terms of time spent. As shown in Table 2, the level of social media exposure, measured by time spent, yielded a composite mean of 3.45, described as "High." This high level of exposure suggests that social media is no longer just a leisure

activity for students but a deeply integrated part of their lifestyle that consistently occupies a significant portion of their daily schedule. Among the indicators, indicator 2 (“Social media is part of my everyday routine”) garnered the highest weighted mean of 3.67 (High), followed closely by indicator 3 (“I use social media longer during weekends or free time”) with 3.62 (High). Meanwhile, indicator 4 (“I sometimes sacrifice sleep or study time just to stay active on social media”) had the lowest weighted mean of 3.05, which is described as “Moderate High.” This is supported by Stechler et al. (2025), who emphasize that social media has become a primary platform for political engagement among youth. According to them, the increased duration of time spent online directly facilitates greater access to political information and civic discourse, allowing students to be more aware of current societal issues. The results suggest that social media is a dominant component of the students’ daily lives. While students dedicate a significant amount of time to these platforms, the relatively low mean for sacrificing sleep or study time suggests that a segment of the student population still attempts to manage their screen time in line with their academic and health responsibilities. In the context of digital engagement, Vromen et al. (2016) emphasized that the type of content students interact with, whether entertainment, educational, or political, shapes the extent to which social media affects their civic awareness and real-world political participation.

As presented in the table, the level of social media exposure of students by type of content had a composite mean of 3.36, described as "high." This high result indicates that students do not just use social media for fun, but also rely on it as a main source for getting different kinds of information every day. Among the indicators, indicator 1 (“I frequently watch or engage with entertainment-related content on social media”) had the highest weighted mean of 3.57 (high). In contrast, indicator 4 (“I view or engage with political content online”) gained 3.12, acquired as “Moderate High,” which suggests that the students may be politically aware based on the type of content they encounter on social media. However, with respect to indicator 4, students demonstrate limited engagement with and minimal attention to political content online. Students at Divine Word College of San Jose were asked to identify their level of social media exposure by type. In the study by Vromen et al. (2016), different platforms, such as Facebook's networking focus versus X's microblogging nature, significantly shape how young people engage with social and political issues. In addition, the type of social media students often use can shape how they think about politics (Arias & Montalbo, 2024). Every platform has its own way of showing information, which affects how people understand issues and form opinions.

As presented, the level of social media exposure in terms of social media yielded a composite mean of 3.06, which is described as “Moderate High.” Even though their usage is high, this suggests that students are still selective and prefer to use specific platforms that are more popular or easier for them to navigate. Among the indicators, indicator 2 (“I use TikTok or Instagram mainly for entertainment and trends.”) garnered the highest weighted mean of 3.58, implying that the respondents have a high level of exposure to these specific platforms. This is followed by indicator 5 (“I use TikTok or Instagram mainly for entertainment and trends.”) with a mean of 3.30 (high). In addition, indicator 3 (“I use X (formerly Twitter) to express opinions or read about social and political issues.”) received the lowest weighted mean of 2.45, described as “Moderate Low.” The result suggests that students at Divine Word College of San Jose primarily use visually driven platforms such as TikTok and Instagram for their daily digital consumption. While they maintain a “Moderate High” overall exposure across various platforms, their engagement with text-heavy or opinion-based platforms like X remains relatively lower, indicating a preference for entertainment-centric social media environments.

**Table 3**

*Mean Level of Political Perspective of the students in terms of Knowledge of Political Topics, Expressed political views, Participation in civic duties, and political perspective*

Indicators (Knowledge of Political Topics)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am aware of current political issues in the Philippines.	3.42	High
2. I know about the roles and responsibilities of government leaders.	3.34	High
3. I keep track of political developments through social media.	3.12	Moderate High
4. I understand the importance of government policies in everyday life.	3.41	High
5. I feel knowledgeable when discussing political topics with others.	3.19	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.3	High

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Indicators (Expressed political views)		
1. I express my personal political opinions on social media.	2.67	Moderate High
2. I openly discuss political issues with my classmates or peers.	2.8	Moderate High
3. I share or react to political posts on my social media accounts.	2.86	Moderate High
4. I feel confident in voicing my stance on political matters.	2.92	Moderate High
5. I encourage others to be more politically aware through my views.	3.06	Moderate High
Composite Mean	2.86	Moderate High
Indicators (Participation in civic duties and political perspective)		
1. I participate in school or community civic-related activities (e.g., campaigns, forums).	3.01	Moderate High
2. Social media influences me to get involved in political or civic issues.	3.03	Moderate High
3. I believe students like me have a role in shaping political awareness.	3.13	Moderate High
4. I consider voting and civic participation important in society.	3.31	High
5. I am willing to take part in future civic or political activities.	3.1	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.12	Moderate High
OVERALL MEAN	3.09	High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

In relation to Boulianne (2015), online news and social media help students learn more about political issues and understand the roles of government leaders and policies. However, using these sources does not always make students feel confident talking about politics. Table 3 shows that students have high political knowledge, with an overall score of 3.30, indicating they generally know a great deal about political issues. This high result shows that students are paying close attention to current events, which means they are well-informed and aware of the political issues happening around them. Overall, the table shows that students have a solid understanding of politics, which may be influenced by the news and social media they follow.

Students at Divine Word College of San Jose were asked to identify their political perspectives based on their expressed political views. The way individuals express their political opinions online is a vital part of modern civic engagement. In conformity with Vromen et al.'s (2016) research, social media platforms have provided a "connective" space where young people can transition from passive consumers of information to active participants who express their own political identities and viewpoints. Table 3 presents a composite mean of 2.86, which is indicated as "moderately high." Even though students are knowledgeable, the moderate high result suggests that they are still a bit careful or hesitant when it comes to publicly sharing their own political opinions with others. Even though all indicators were described as "moderately high," Indicator 5 ("I encourage others to be more politically aware through my views.") obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.06. In contrast, Indicator 1 ("I express my personal political opinions on social media.") recorded the lowest weighted mean at 2.67.

The results indicate that students generally exhibit a moderate level of political engagement on social media. While all indicators fall within the "Moderate High" range, the higher mean score of Indicator 5 suggests that students are more inclined to influence or encourage political awareness among others rather than openly express their own political opinions. Conversely, the lower mean of Indicator 1 implies a degree of hesitation or restraint in directly sharing personal political views online. Students at Divine Word College of San Jose were asked to identify their level of political involvement in civic duties. Active engagement in civic activities is a fundamental aspect of a student's political development. As Kahne and Bowyer (2018) note, the digital age has reshaped how youth perceive their civic duties, moving beyond traditional voting to include online advocacy and community-based civic participation. As presented, Table 3 acquired a composite mean of 3.12, which is indicated as "moderate high." This indicates that while students value the importance of being a good citizen, there is still room for them to become more actively involved in actual community or school-related activities. Among these indicators, indicator 4 ("I consider voting and civic participation important in society.") gained the highest weighted mean of 3.31, denoted in verbal description as "high." This implies that students are aware of the importance of participating in society and the electoral process. It is then followed by indicator 1 ("I participate in school or community civic-related activities (e.g., campaigns, forums)."), which only gained a weighted mean of 3.1, specified as "moderate high." This indicates that although students acknowledge the importance of civic engagement, their participation in school- or community-based civic activities is only moderate, suggesting a gap

between awareness and actual involvement.

**Table 4**

*Path Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Paths	Correlation Coefficients	Effect size	T-value	P-value	Interpretation
Social Media exposure → Political Perspective	0.637	0.406	11.61	0.001	Significant
Social Media exposure → Profile of respondents	0.089	0.008	1.262	0.05	Significant
Political Perspective → Profile of respondents	-0.08	0.007	-1.17	0.242	Not Significant

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

The relationship between media consumption and personal outlook is a key area of study in digital sociology. In Boulianne's (2015) study, social media use has a significant, positive relationship with various forms of engagement, suggesting that increased exposure to digital content can lead to higher levels of civic and political participation. In this study, social media exposure refers to the level of students' interaction with digital platforms, including time spent, content type, and social media type, and political perspective refers to students' knowledge, expressed views, and involvement in civic duties. As shown in Table 4, the path from social media exposure to political perspective had a correlation coefficient of 0.637. Based on the scale provided, this indicates a moderate positive correlation. The statistical analysis further reveals a T-value of 11.61 and a P-value of 0.001. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the relationship is interpreted as significant. This is supported by an effect size of 0.406, indicating that social media exposure has a substantial impact on the students' political perspective.

Furthermore, the path from social media exposure to respondents' profiles shows a correlation coefficient of 0.089 and a P-value of 0.05, which is considered significant. However, the relationship between political perspective and respondents' profiles yielded a correlation coefficient of -0.08 and a P-value of 0.242, indicating that this relationship is not significant. The findings suggest that social media exposure is a strong predictor of students' political perspectives at Divine Word College of San Jose. As students spend more time on social media and engage with diverse content, their political knowledge and involvement tend to increase significantly, regardless of their specific demographic profile.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn: Social Media Exposure and Its Correlation with the Political Perspective of Students. The findings indicate that social media exposure significantly influences the political perspectives of students at Divine Word College of San Jose. Students who spend more time on social media and are exposed to different types of content tend to become more aware of political issues. The demographic profile of the respondents: The study found that most respondents were Senior High School students, with Grade 12 students and those from the STEM strand comprising the largest groups. Students from the STEM strand comprised the highest proportion of respondents, followed by those from the ABM/BAE cluster, while the HUMSS/ASSH cluster had the lowest frequency. The respondents included both male and female students, as well as those who preferred not to disclose their sex. Level of Social Media Exposure of the Students in Divine Word College of San Jose: The level of social media exposure, in terms of time spent, was high, suggesting that social media is a dominant part of their daily routines. The type of content encountered by the students also resulted in a high level, which indicates frequent exposure to politically relevant information.

The students tended to use social media at a moderate-to-high level, showing a clear preference for visually focused platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Level of Political Perspectives of Students in Divine Word College of San Jose: The findings suggest that students demonstrate a developing level of political perspective, particularly in terms of knowledge of political topics, expression of political views, and involvement in civic duties, which may be influenced by their exposure to social media. There is a significant relationship between social media exposure and students' political perspectives. The results of the study showed a clear connection between

the students' social media use and their political views. Students who spent more time online and engaged with diverse content, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, and became more aware of political issues. This also shaped how they formed opinions and shared their political views. The study found that a student's grade and school strand make a difference. For example, Grade 12 students and STEM strand students spend more time on social media. Because they spend more time online, they are more aware of political issues and more likely to join the conversation. The findings suggested that social media is a major factor in how students form their political opinions. It is not just a place to scroll through photos or videos anymore. For many, it has become the main place to catch up on the news and talk with others about what is happening in the world.

**Recommendations** - In light of the significant findings and their conclusions, the following recommendations are presented. Students may become more critical in evaluating information on social media by considering their grade level, academic strand, and sex, as these factors may influence how they interpret and engage with political content online. Students may manage their level of social media exposure by being mindful of the time spent online, the types of content they consume, and the social media platforms they use, thereby supporting informed political awareness. Students may enhance their political perspective by strengthening their knowledge of political topics, responsibly expressing their political views, and actively participating in civic duties both online and offline. School administrators may promote media and political literacy programs that address the effects of social media use on students' political perspectives, while accounting for differences in student profiles and online behavior. Future researchers may include a wider range of student profiles and further examine the relationship between social media exposure and political perspective to understand the significant correlation between these variables.

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# Influence of playing Roblox on learning engagement and emotional well-being of students in Divine Word College of San Jose

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## ***Abstract***

This study examined the influence of playing Roblox on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being at Divine Word College of San Jose. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the researcher collected data from 66 student respondents through structured questionnaires. The study focused on how factors such as collaboration, creativity, imagination, resilience, self-esteem, and self-respect were associated with students' engagement in learning and overall emotional well-being. Results revealed positive relationships between playing Roblox and students' collaboration, creativity, and resilience, while moderate effects were observed on self-esteem and emotional regulation. The findings suggest that, when balanced with academic responsibilities, playing Roblox can support learning engagement and enhance emotional well-being among students. The significant relationship found between playing Roblox, learning engagement, and emotional well-being suggests that Roblox serves as an effective educational and psychosocial platform for students. The findings validate the effectiveness of a structured, self-administered questionnaire as the research instrument, as it comprehensively covered various dimensions of learning engagement, such as collaboration, social interaction, creativity, and imagination, as well as emotional well-being factors, including resilience, self-esteem, and self-respect. This study recommends that parents be encouraged to guide and monitor their children's gaming habits while maintaining open communication with them about their online experiences, to support their children's confidence, resilience, responsible decision-making, teamwork, and social interaction, as well as their online behavior. Proper guidance and support for a child are the best way to help them grow physically and mentally.

**Keywords:** Roblox, learning engagement, emotional well-being, quantitative research, gaming habits

## **Influence of playing Roblox on learning engagement and emotional well-being of students in Divine Word College of San Jose**

### **1. Introduction**

In the digital age, Roblox has become one of the most popular online gaming platforms worldwide. It is a user-made, interactive space where players can create, share, and explore various types of games, including adventure, horror, simulation, roleplay, trivia, and obstacle courses, making it not only a gaming space but also a creative environment. Furthermore, Hernández et al. (2022) reported that Roblox-based activities are enjoyable for students because they support social interaction and cooperative problem-solving. Moreover, these qualities may support teamwork, self-expression, and creative thinking; however, their impact on students' interest in learning, engagement, and emotional well-being has not been thoroughly examined in formal research. Earlier studies have shown that Roblox can help develop digital literacy.

Moreover, these qualities may support teamwork, self-expression, and creative thinking; however, their impact on students' interest in learning, engagement, and emotional well-being has not been thoroughly examined in formal research. Earlier studies have shown that Roblox can help develop digital literacy. As students navigate academic demands and emotional pressures, Rospigliosi (2022) suggests that digital play can both support engagement and pose risks when use becomes excessive or poorly regulated. However, in the Philippine context, Rangel-Pérez et al. (2023) state that most existing work broadly focuses on online gaming or ICT use, and there are insufficient studies in the Philippines on how these factors affect learning engagement and emotional well-being. This research addresses that gap by examining how playing Roblox affects learning engagement and emotional well-being among senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose.

This research addresses that gap by testing how playing Roblox influences the learning engagement and emotional well-being of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. The findings of this study will serve as the basis for recommendations to encourage responsible gaming, enhance learning engagement, and support students' emotional well-being. This can be achieved by examining research findings on how Roblox affects students' emotional well-being and level of engagement in learning. Teachers and educational institutions can use similar game-based strategies to make learning more engaging if the data indicates that playing Roblox enhances students' focus, engagement, and creativity. However, parents and administrators can establish guidelines to promote responsible gaming and balanced screen time if the study shows that excessive gaming leads to attention or mental stress. Through these insights, the research can serve as a useful guide in developing educational programs by helping schools design game-based learning strategies if Roblox shows positive effects or by creating clear screen-time policies and digital wellness programs if excessive use negatively affects students' focus and emotional well-being.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to assess the impact of playing Roblox on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being at Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex, grade level, and frequency of playing Roblox? (2) What is the level of students' learning engagement while playing Roblox, in terms of collaboration & social interaction and creativity & imagination? (3) What is the level of students' emotional well-being while playing Roblox, in terms of resilience, self-esteem, and self-respect? (4) Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile and playing Roblox on the learning engagement and emotional well-being of students?

**Significance of the Study** - This study aims to provide valuable information about how playing Roblox influences students' learning engagement and emotional well-being. The results of this research may be useful to several groups who are directly involved in students' learning and development. Senior high school students may

benefit from this study by gaining a clearer understanding of how their gaming habits, particularly playing Roblox, may influence their level of engagement in learning and their emotional condition. Furthermore, this research can benefit educators by offering insights into the relationship between students' gaming habits and their classroom participation. While senior high school students can regulate their own screen use, the findings may help parents understand how gaming habits influence concentration, engagement in school activities, and emotional reactions. This understanding may guide parents in supporting their children to maintain a healthy balance between gaming and academic responsibilities. School administrators may use the findings of this study as a guide to create or improve school guidelines on students' gaming habits. The results may also help develop programs or awareness activities that encourage responsible gaming while ensuring that students remain engaged in their studies. Guidance counselors may use the findings of this study to understand better how students' Roblox gaming habits affect their learning engagement and emotional well-being. The results may also help counselors address gaming habits during guidance sessions and raise awareness of responsible gaming. These activities may also encourage students to reflect on their gaming habits and learn how to balance gaming with their academic responsibilities. Lastly, this study may serve as a reference for future researchers planning to conduct similar studies on Roblox, learning engagement, and emotional well-being. It may also provide a basis for further research on related topics such as screen time management. In addition, the findings may help support the development of future student policies or educational programs.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study focused on identifying the influence of playing Roblox on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being at Divine Word College of San Jose. The respondents in this study were senior high school students enrolled in the academic year 2025-2026. Furthermore, the study considered only individuals with at least 1 year of experience playing Roblox to ensure consistent exposure to the platform. This study does not cover other online gaming platforms or students from other academic institutions to ensure a focused analysis within the specified demographic and digital environment.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. This design was appropriate for describing the levels of variables and examining their relationships without manipulation. The descriptive aspect determined the demographic profile, level of playing Roblox, learning engagement, and emotional well-being. The correlational aspect tested relationships, such as between playing Roblox and learning engagement, and between playing Roblox and emotional well-being.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents in this study were selected from students in the Senior High School department at Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ) who had been actively playing Roblox for at least one year. The exact number of respondents was finalized after data collection, with representation across various academic strands and grade levels (Grades 11 and 12) to provide comprehensive insights. Thus, there were 66 respondents in all who were actively playing Roblox, out of a total population of 412.

**Research Instrument** - The researcher-made questionnaire was the main research instrument in this study. The questionnaire was composed of three parts: the respondents' demographic profile, learning engagement in two aspects (collaboration & social interaction and creativity & imagination), and emotional well-being in three aspects (resilience, self-esteem, and self-respect). Moreover, expert validation was conducted to ensure the instrument's validity and reliability. There were 3 experts in the field of research from the senior high and college departments who also validated the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire uses a four-point Likert scale, with options ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

**Data Gathering Procedure** - To gather quantitative data, researchers sent one (1) request letter to the department coordinator of the Senior High School Department of Divine Word College of San Jose to secure approval to conduct a survey for each section. The researchers then obtained proper consent from the respondents to ensure confidentiality. All collected information was used solely for academic and research purposes. After

approval was granted, the researchers personally distributed the validated survey questionnaire to the qualified respondents, who are senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose and have been playing Roblox for at least 1 year. It took two (2) days to finish the data-gathering procedure.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - Frequency and percentage were used to present the respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender distribution. The weighted mean was used to determine the levels of the variables related to playing Roblox, learning engagement, and emotional well-being. Learning engagement encompassed collaboration, social interaction, creativity, and imagination, while emotional well-being encompassed resilience, self-esteem, and self-respect. Regression analysis was used to determine the influence of the independent variables, which are the demographic profile and playing Roblox, on the dependent variables, which are learning engagement and emotional well-being. This analysis helped identify the influence of playing Roblox and demographic factors on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researchers made sure that every student was treated with kindness and respect. Before the researchers began, respondents were clearly informed of the research's purpose and voluntarily agreed to participate. Their answers would remain confidential, and all data collected was used only for educational purposes. All data were securely stored and used only for research purposes. Furthermore, the researchers will adhere to the ethical guidelines set by Divine Word College of San Jose, thereby upholding the principles of honesty, respect, and integrity throughout the research.

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1**

*Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Indicators (Sex)	Frequency	Percentage
Male	32	48.48%
Female	34	51.52%
Total	66	100%
Indicators (Grade Level)		
Grade 11	33	50
Grade 12	33	50
Total	66	100%
Indicators (Frequency of Playing Roblox)		
Less than a week	19	28.79%
3-5 times/week	25	37.88%
6-8 times/week	9	13.64%
9-11 times/week	6	9.09%
12 times or more per week	7	10.61%
Total	66	100%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents by frequency of playing Roblox, grade level, and sex. The total number of respondents is 66, with 32 (48.48%) being male and 34 (51.52%) being female. The data suggest that the gender distribution is nearly equal, thereby guaranteeing that both groups are adequately represented in the sample. These figures align with the study by Han et al. (2023), which noted that Roblox attracts a diverse global population of young users and emphasized the importance of sex as a demographic variable in digital research. Furthermore, Hernández et al. (2022) observed that Roblox users in educational settings come from varied backgrounds, which supports the platform's inclusive nature as a basis for examining student engagement and emotional well-being.

In terms of academic level, the data shows a uniform distribution, with 33 (50%) respondents from Grade 11 and 33 (50%) from Grade 12. As noted by Hernández et al. (2022) and Han et al. (2023), grade level is a significant demographic variable in educational studies, as engagement patterns and learning outcomes may vary according to academic stage. Moreover, research by Meier et al. (2020) and Jin (2024) confirms that senior high school students possess the cognitive and technological proficiency required for participation in immersive, game-based learning environments.

The final indicator assesses the frequency of Roblox gameplay among the respondents. The results suggest that while a majority of respondents engage with Roblox regularly, usage patterns generally remain moderate. In this regard, Sadović et al. (2024) assert that the frequency of access is a critical factor in evaluating behavioral and learning outcomes, noting that regular yet moderated use is common among school-aged children. Moreover, Han et al. (2023) asserted that regular access to the platform cultivates familiarity and engagement via repeated exposure. This conclusion is corroborated by Faridah and Deng (2024), who found that students with regular gaming experience exhibit greater engagement and greater acceptability when the platform is used for educational purposes.

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of Learning Engagement in terms of Collaboration and Social Interaction & Creativity, and Imagination*

Indicators (Collaboration and Social Interaction)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. When playing Roblox with friends or teammates, I work together with them to achieve shared goals.	3.18	Moderate High
2. I communicate and coordinate with other players in Roblox to complete game objectives.	3.21	Moderate High
3. Playing Roblox encourages me to listen to my teammates' ideas and give my suggestions.	3.01	Moderate High
4. I cooperate with friends or teammates in Roblox by supporting each other during gameplay.	3.18	Moderate High
5. Playing Roblox with others helps me build positive relationships through teamwork and communication.	3.13	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.14	Moderate High
Indicators (Creativity and Imagination)		
1. Playing Roblox allows me to create my own game worlds and explore new ideas.	3.03	Moderate High
2. I enjoy designing characters or items in Roblox that reflect my own unique ideas.	3.15	Moderate High
3. Playing Roblox inspires me to think of new ways to solve challenges or complete tasks.	3.21	Moderate High
4. I use my imagination to invent stories and scenarios while playing Roblox	2.87	Moderate High
5. Playing Roblox	3.07	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.07	Moderate High
Total Mean	3.10	Moderate High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

Table 2 shows the level of students' learning engagement while playing Roblox in terms of collaboration and social interaction. The result indicated that the second indicator had the highest weighted mean, specifically 3.21. However, indicator 3 had the lowest weighted mean of 3.01. The assessment of each indicator yielded a moderately high composite mean, indicating a relatively positive level of respondents' involvement. Furthermore, the composite mean of 3.14 indicates that students demonstrated a moderately high level of learning engagement during their interactions with Roblox. The findings recommended that students frequently engage in collaboration and gathering while playing games, especially those that require communication, collaboration, and teamwork. However, differences in average scores revealed that students had varying skill levels in collaborating and interacting with others. The findings are corroborated by a study conducted by Jawhar et al. (2024), which demonstrated that Roblox fosters teamwork among players by encouraging communication and problem-solving. In the same vein, Cai et al. (2025) found that collaborative digital simulation enhanced student engagement and motivation, thereby reaffirming the moderate-to-high level of involvement observed in this study. Even though Roblox's related features encouraged social contact, Du et al. (2021) found that the degree and type of engagement depended on the specific setting and the person involved. This result explained the lower weighted means observed for certain indicators, despite the overall positive outcome. The study shows that Roblox had a beneficial effect on students' learning engagement by facilitating collaboration and social interaction; however, the results varied across indicators.

Moreover, the study evaluates how students participate in learning within Roblox, highlighting their creativity

and imagination. The results showed that Indicator 3 had the highest weighted mean (3.21), while Indicator 4 had the lowest (2.87). The composite mean of 3.07, defined as Moderate High, indicated that students generally exhibited a moderate-to-high level of creativity and imagination while on Roblox. This observation suggests that students were capable of expressing ideas, designing characters or items, and investigating novel concepts through playing Roblox, regardless of the different levels of imaginative engagement across the indicators. These results were confirmed by Cheng (2025), who documented that open and user-generated environments, such as Roblox, encouraged increased creative engagement by allowing players to design, modify, and explore game worlds freely. In a similar study, Meier et al. (2020) found that students who used Roblox were able to create interactive virtual worlds even with little technological knowledge. This made them more confident and creative. Overall, the findings show that Roblox favorably affects students' creativity and imagination, while involvement varied across distinct creative dimensions.

**Table 3**

*Mean Level of Resilience, Self-Esteem, and Self-Respect*

Indicators (Resilience)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. When I fail a challenge in Roblox, I keep trying until I succeed.	2.97	Moderate High
2. Playing Roblox helps me stay patient when tasks or levels are difficult.	2.78	Moderate High
3. I learn from my mistakes while playing Roblox and try new strategies.	3.18	Moderate High
4. Playing Roblox motivates me to keep improving my skills even after setbacks.	3.07	Moderate High
5. I don't give up easily when I face obstacles in Roblox.	2.93	Moderate High
Composite Mean	2.99	Moderate High
Indicators (Self-Esteem)		
1. Playing Roblox makes me feel confident in my abilities to complete challenges	3.06	Moderate High
2. I feel proud of myself when I achieve goals or win games in Roblox.	3.28	High
3. Playing Roblox helps me believe in my ability to make good decisions in the game.	3.22	Moderate High
4. I feel capable and confident when I try new strategies in Roblox.	3.21	Moderate High
5. Playing Roblox encourages me to trust my skills and abilities.	3.18	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.19	Moderate High
Indicators (Self-Respect)		
1. Playing Roblox encourages me to follow rules and play fairly with others.	3.13	Moderate High
2. I feel good about myself when I help teammates in Roblox.	3.33	Moderate High
3. Playing Roblox motivates me to take responsibility for my actions in the game.	3.12	Moderate High
4. I treat myself with respect by staying patient and composed during challenging games.	2.98	Moderate High
5. Playing Roblox helps me feel proud when I act honestly and respectfully toward others	3.03	Moderate High
Composite Mean	3.12	Moderate High
Total Mean	3.10	Moderate High

Scale: 3.25-4.00 High; 2.50-3.24 Moderate High; 1.75-2.49 Moderate Low; 1.00-1.74 Low

Table 3 shows the level of students' emotional well-being in Roblox, measured by resilience. The results show that Indicator 3 had the highest weighted mean of 3.18, indicating that students frequently demonstrate resilience while playing Roblox. Meanwhile, Indicator 2 reveals the lowest weighted mean of 2.78, showing that resilience was present but less obvious in some situations. The overall mean of 2.99, analyzed as moderate-high, indicates that students generally demonstrated a moderate to high level of resilience when playing. These findings suggest that playing Roblox may help students handle challenges, regulate their emotions, and recover from difficulties in the game environment. However, the level of resilience varied across the indicators, indicating that students did not experience it in the same way. This result is supported by a study of Canale et al. (2019), who explained that psychological resilience can serve as a protective factor against stress and unhealthy gaming behaviors, helping individuals manage gaming-related challenges more effectively. Similarly, Pusey et al. (2020) explained that interactive technologies, such as digital games, may support the development of resilience by allowing players to practice problem-solving and coping strategies through feedback and active engagement. In addition, Maresch and

Kampman (2022) suggested that online gaming environments can provide a sense of safety where players reflect on their strategies and outcomes, which may strengthen resilience. However, the results also align with the view of Tichon and Mavin (2016), who noted that the experience of overcoming challenges in games varies among individuals and depends on personal factors and context. This perspective helps explain why some indicators showed lower weighted means despite the overall Moderate High level of resilience. Overall, the findings suggest that Roblox may contribute positively to students' emotional well-being by supporting resilience, although the extent of this effect differs among players.

The table also presents the students' emotional well-being, specifically self-esteem, while playing Roblox. The results show that Indicator 2 obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.28, which was interpreted as High. This indicates that students felt satisfied when they achieved goals or won the game. Such experiences may strengthen students' sense of competence and accomplishment. On the other hand, Indicator 1 had the lowest weighted mean of 3.06, which was described as "moderately high." This means that while students usually showed confidence when dealing with challenges, their confidence sometimes decreased when tasks were more difficult. The composite mean of 3.19, also interpreted as "moderate high," indicates that students generally felt confident in their abilities while playing Roblox. These results suggest that achieving goals in the game may help students feel proud of themselves and capable of doing tasks. However, some studies show different views. A study by Lemenager et al. (2020) found that playing games may only temporarily boost self-esteem, especially among individuals with low self-esteem. Similarly, Cudo et al. (2019) reveal that low self-esteem can sometimes lead to unhealthy gaming habits, suggesting that confidence gained from gaming may not last long. Overall, the results suggest that playing Roblox in moderation may improve students' self-esteem by allowing them to experience success and achievement in the game. However, the impact of gaming on self-esteem appears to vary among students and may not always be lasting. Moreover, the findings also show how playing Roblox influenced students' sense of self-respect. Indicator 2 had the highest weighted mean of 3.33, classified as High.

In contrast, Indicator 1 gained the lowest weighted mean of 2.99, which is defined as "Moderate High." The overall mean of 3.10, also defined as "moderate high," shows that students generally had a moderately high level of self-respect while playing the game. These results suggest that Roblox may encourage responsible behavior, following rules, and respect for other players, especially during collaborative and goal-oriented gameplay. However, the differences in the weighted means indicate that students experienced self-respect differently across its aspects. The findings support the study by Corbitt and Becker (2024), which found that Roblox can foster community interaction and identity development. Through active participation on the platform, players may develop a sense of agency and self-respect by taking part in meaningful activities. Similarly, Damanhuri and Wali (2024) reported that collaborative gameplay and moral scenarios in Roblox may encourage responsibility and respectful behavior among young players. On the other hand, some studies show different results. Green et al. (2020) explained that strong attachment to avatars and problematic gaming behavior may negatively affect self-respect, especially when gaming is used to escape real-life problems. Similarly, Kavanagh et al. (2023) noted that although gaming may temporarily increase self-esteem, this improvement does not always translate into long-term self-respect, particularly among individuals who develop unhealthy gaming habits.

Overall, the results suggest that Roblox is associated with higher levels of self-respect among students. This may be influenced by game experiences that encourage cooperation, responsibility, and fair play. However, differences across indicators and mixed results from previous studies suggest that the development of self-respect through gaming may depend on students' individual experiences and on how they play.

Table 4 shows the path coefficients, effect sizes, t-values, and p-values concerning the direct effects of Roblox gameplay on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being at Divine Word College of San Jose. The results demonstrate a statistically significant positive impact on learning engagement ( $\beta = 0.314$ ,  $t = 2.65$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01), which posits that playing Roblox does not significantly affect students' learning engagement, is rejected. This rejection is supported by the p-value, which is below 0.05. thus offering sufficient evidence to support the claim that Roblox gameplay has a significant effect. Furthermore, the effect size

( $r^2 = 0.099$ ) suggests a small, yet meaningful, influence.

**Table 4**

*Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing*

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	Effect Size	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Profile of the Students' → Learning Engagement	0.314	0.099	2.65	0.01	Significant
Profile of the Students' → Emotional Well-Being	0.254	0.065	2.1	0.04	Significant

Legend: p-value < 0.05 Significant

Similarly, the results show a significant relationship between playing Roblox and students' emotional well-being. This is supported by the obtained correlation coefficient of 0.254, a t-value of 2.10, and a p-value of 0.040. Since the p-value is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that playing Roblox is measurably connected to students' emotional well-being. The effect size ( $r^2 = 0.065$ ) further suggests that although the level of influence is not very high, it still represents a valuable contribution to students' emotional well-being. These findings are consistent with previous studies that also tested the role of Roblox in education and student development. For instance, Faridah and Deng (2024) pointed out that Roblox provides an interactive environment that can increase students' participation and interest in learning activities. Likewise, Alhasan et al. (2023) explained that when Roblox is effectively integrated into classroom activities, it can help students collaborate to solve problems and develop a deeper understanding of the lesson. Studies by Ho and Lee (2023) and Meier et al. (2020) also reported that Roblox-based learning activities can improve creativity, cooperation, and active participation through games and learning methods.

In terms of emotional well-being, Hernández et al. (2022) observed that multiplayer game environments, such as Roblox, encourage peer interaction, promote empathy, and help students develop a sense of belonging, all of which are important aspects of students' emotional growth. Additionally, Damanhuri and Wali (2024) found that Roblox games incorporating elements of moral and character education can encourage positive social behavior and better emotional regulation among players. Vuorre et al. (2022) and Johannes et al. (2021) have shown that intrinsic motivation, social connection, and autonomy during gameplay positively influence emotional well-being. This supports the significant connections found in this research. Lastly, the significant relationship found between playing Roblox, learning engagement, and emotional well-being suggests that Roblox serves as an effective educational and psychosocial platform for students.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study on the influence of playing Roblox on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being at Divine Word College of San Jose, several conclusions were drawn: First, the demographic profile showed that the respondents were almost evenly divided by sex. However, there were slightly more females than males. Grade 11 and Grade 12 students were also equally represented in the study. Most respondents reported playing Roblox about 3 to 5 times a week, suggesting they played the game regularly but not excessively. This observation implies that the platform fosters communication, teamwork, and creative problem-solving. Furthermore, students demonstrated moderate to high levels of emotional well-being while playing Roblox, as evidenced by their resilience, self-esteem, and self-respect throughout the gaming experience. Playing Roblox seems to help students feel more emotionally stable and confident as they complete goals in the game. The study also found a strong relationship between playing Roblox and the variables examined. In particular, there was a significant connection between Roblox gameplay and students' learning engagement and emotional well-being. Consequently, students' involvement with Roblox appears to affect both their academic engagement and emotional well-being, with consistent yet moderate gameplay exerting a beneficial influence on these aspects.

**Recommendations** - Based on the study's conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed. The students may follow simple guidelines to play more safely, such as setting limits on screen time and practicing

good online behavior, especially since they use Roblox regularly. Students may also be encouraged to practice self-discipline in managing their gaming time to avoid negative effects on their school performance. To improve their learning engagement, students may draw on the collaboration, creativity, and imagination skills they develop while playing Roblox. Students may also reflect on how playing the game affects their emotional well-being, including resilience, self-worth, and self-respect. Playing games can also help them build social skills, make better decisions, and gain more confidence. School administrators may include interactive and team-based activities inspired by games in extracurricular programs. This can help students apply the skills they develop in Roblox, like teamwork and creativity, to their schoolwork and other activities. Future researchers may study the effects of playing Roblox on students' learning engagement and emotional well-being using larger and more diverse groups. They may also look at other factors, such as gaming platforms, screen time, or academic performance, to better understand how gaming affects students.

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# Traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations in breastfeeding among Vietnamese mothers: A descriptive-correlational study

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## Abstract

Breastfeeding is a critical determinant of maternal and child health, providing optimal nutrition and immune protection for infants while supporting maternal recovery after childbirth. In Vietnam, breastfeeding practices are influenced not only by clinical recommendations but also by cultural beliefs, family traditions, and religious values. Understanding these contextual influences is essential for developing a glocalized maternal and child health framework that integrates global health standards with culturally grounded practices. This study assessed traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations related to breastfeeding among Vietnamese mothers and examined their associations with selected sociodemographic characteristics. A descriptive–inferential–correlational design was employed among 375 Vietnamese mothers selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using validated self-administered instruments: the Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Breastfeeding Survey and the Traditional Motivations on Breastfeeding Survey, both using Likert-scale responses. Descriptive statistics summarized participant characteristics and responses, while regression analysis examined relationships among variables. Participants were primarily young, married mothers with high school education, predominantly Buddhist, and employed full-time. Mothers strongly endorsed traditional beliefs ( $M = 3.27$ ) and practices ( $M = 3.25$ ), influenced by family support, religious guidance, digital information, and community health services. Motivational factors ( $M = 3.20$ ) included maternal identity, comfort, postnatal recovery, nutrition, and infant care confidence. Significant differences were observed across sociodemographic variables ( $p < .001$ ), with positive correlations among beliefs, practices, and motivations ( $p < .001$ ). Vietnamese mothers' breastfeeding behaviors are strongly shaped by cultural, familial, and motivational factors. Culturally sensitive interventions integrating family and community support may enhance optimal breastfeeding practices, particularly among working mothers.

**Keywords:** traditional beliefs, practices, motivations, breastfeeding, Vietnamese mothers

## **Traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations in breastfeeding among Vietnamese mothers: A descriptive-correlational study**

### **1. Introduction**

Breastfeeding is widely recognized as a cornerstone of maternal and child health; however, breastfeeding practices are shaped by a complex interplay of biomedical guidance, cultural beliefs, family influence, and social norms (Alimi et al., 2021). In Vietnam, traditional postpartum practices—including dietary modifications, hygiene rituals, and reliance on family support—remain deeply embedded in maternal care and continue to exert a significant influence on breastfeeding behaviors (Chetwynd et al., 2025). These cultural practices may affect breastfeeding initiation, frequency, and duration, as well as maternal confidence and adherence to recommended guidelines. Despite strong national and global policy commitments aligned with World Health Organization recommendations, breastfeeding remains a critical public health challenge in Vietnam, where suboptimal practices contribute to preventable infant morbidity and mortality (Ji et al., 2025). Although Vietnam has formally adopted policies promoting early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, adherence remains inconsistent, particularly during the early postpartum period (Kalhor et al., 2025). Empirical evidence indicates that breastfeeding behaviors in Vietnam are influenced not only by maternal knowledge and health service access but also by entrenched postpartum traditions, family hierarchies, and sociocultural norms that shape maternal decision-making (Mendelson, 2024).

Vietnamese postpartum practices—such as dietary restrictions, confinement rituals, and deference to elder female relatives—have been shown to exert both supportive and constraining effects on breastfeeding. In particular, grandmothers and mothers-in-law often play a decisive role in infant feeding decisions, at times encouraging early supplementation or traditional remedies that conflict with exclusive breastfeeding recommendations (Prabasari & Rukmini, 2025). Quantitative studies have linked these intergenerational influences to delayed initiation and reduced exclusivity of breastfeeding, especially in rural and peri-urban contexts (Taft, 2025). However, cultural practices in these studies are frequently treated as static background variables rather than as dynamic systems of meaning actively negotiated within families and communities.

Theoretical engagement within the Vietnamese breastfeeding literature remains limited. Most studies implicitly adopt an individual-level biomedical or knowledge-deficit framework, emphasizing maternal education and contact with health services as primary determinants of breastfeeding outcomes (Victora et al., 2021). Few studies explicitly apply social ecological theory, which conceptualizes breastfeeding as shaped by interacting influences at the individual, interpersonal, community, and institutional levels. Even fewer draw on medical anthropology or cultural models theory, which are particularly relevant in Vietnam, where postpartum practices are embedded in shared cultural beliefs regarding bodily balance, maternal vulnerability, and infant protection. The absence of explicit theoretical framing limits the explanatory depth of existing findings and constrains their translation into culturally responsive interventions.

Methodologically, the Vietnamese breastfeeding literature is dominated by cross-sectional surveys and secondary analyses of national datasets (Rollins et al., 2021). While these approaches are valuable for identifying prevalence and correlates, they provide limited findings into how mothers navigate competing advice from health professionals and family members during the postpartum period. Although some studies exist, they are relatively sparse, often geographically localized, and insufficiently integrated into intervention or implementation research.

Taken together, the Vietnamese literature reveals a critical gap at the intersection of theory, culture, and maternal decision-making. There is insufficient context-specific, theory-driven research examining how traditional postpartum beliefs and intergenerational family dynamics actively shape breastfeeding practices in contemporary Vietnam. Addressing this gap is essential for informing breastfeeding interventions that move beyond information

provision to engage with the cultural logics and social relationships that structure maternal behavior. A theoretically grounded approach is therefore warranted to generate evidence that is both culturally meaningful and programmatically actionable.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Breastfeeding is a vital component of maternal and child health, yet mothers' breastfeeding behaviors are shaped not only by biomedical guidelines but also by traditional beliefs, cultural practices, and personal motivations. In Vietnam, these traditional influences remain deeply embedded in family structures, religious practices, and community norms, potentially affecting mothers' adherence to recommended breastfeeding practices. Despite global and national efforts to promote optimal breastfeeding, challenges such as maternal employment, changing lifestyles, and exposure to diverse sources of information may influence how traditional beliefs and practices are maintained or modified.

Although several studies have examined breastfeeding prevalence and outcomes in Vietnam, there is limited empirical evidence that simultaneously explores traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations and how these factors interrelate. Furthermore, insufficient attention has been given to how sociodemographic characteristics such as age, civil status, educational attainment, religion, and employment status influence these traditional dimensions of breastfeeding care. Therefore, this study sought to assess the traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations in breastfeeding among Vietnamese mothers and to determine the differences and relationships among these variables. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the Vietnamese mother-respondents
2. What are the traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations in breastfeeding among Vietnamese mothers?
3. Is there a significant relationship among traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations in breastfeeding care?

## 3. Methods

A descriptive-correlational design was used to evaluate breastfeeding-related beliefs, practices, and motivations and examine associations with maternal demographic characteristics (Hayes, Bonner, & Douglas, 2013). This approach supports the development of culturally sensitive breastfeeding programs that integrate local traditions and global best practices. Participants were mothers seeking care at baby-friendly obstetric and pediatric hospitals in Long-An Province, Vietnam. Using G\*Power analysis, a minimum sample of 375 was required to achieve 90% power at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , accounting for 10% attrition. Proportionate stratified random sampling ensured demographic representation, with simple random selection applied using electronic randomization. The study included Vietnamese mothers aged 19–50, currently breastfeeding, with prior breastfeeding experience. Mothers with complicated postpartum conditions, unable to communicate, or who declined participation were excluded in the study.

Data were collected via a self-administered questionnaire adapted from validated tools on breastfeeding beliefs, practices, and motivations (Castalino et al., 2020). The instrument, based on Leininger's Cultural Care Diversity and Universality Model, included four sections: Demographics; Beliefs: technological, religious/philosophical, kinship/social, political/legal, economic/educational factors; Practices: hygienic care, breastfeeding/baby care, dietary modifications; and Motivations: mindset, feelings, exercise, nutrition, self-confidence. Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Content validity was verified through expert review and Brislin's back-translation method. Pilot testing confirmed reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.94$ ). Ethical approval was obtained from the Graduate School and Institutional Ethics Review Committee. Recruitment was coordinated with local councils, and participants provided informed consent. Questionnaires were completed within 10 minutes and collected immediately. Data were handled confidentially according to the Data Privacy Act. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized demographics and survey responses. Shapiro-Wilk tests confirmed normality, allowing parametric analyses. Analyses included: Frequencies and percentages for demographic profiles;

Weighted means and verbal interpretation for beliefs, practices, and motivations; ANOVA to examine differences across demographic characteristics; and Regression analysis to explore relationships among beliefs, practices, and motivations. Significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

#### 4. Results

**Table 1**

*Demographic Profile of the Vietnamese mother-respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Under 20 y/o	84	22.40
21-30 y/o	153	40.80
31-40 y/o	126	33.60
Over 40 y/o	12	3.20
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	64	17.07
Married	213	56.80
Separated	22	5.87
Divorced	7	1.87
Widowed	11	2.92
Common Law Marriage	58	15.47
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Elementary	54	14.40
High school	103	27.47
College	94	25.07
Never been to school	16	4.27
Vocational	82	21.87
Postgraduate	26	6.92
<b>Religion</b>		
Muslim	85	22.67
Christian	71	18.93
Buddhist	173	46.13
Others	46	12.27
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-time	196	52.27
Part time	87	23.20
Unemployed	92	24.53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

The study included 375 Vietnamese mother-respondents, with a mean age of 28.37 years ( $SD = 0.141$ ). The largest age group was 21–30 years (40.8%), followed by 31–40 years (33.6%), under 20 years (22.4%), and over 40 years (3.2%). This distribution indicates that the sample primarily consisted of young to early-middle-aged mothers, reflecting the typical childbearing population in Vietnam. Regarding marital status, most respondents were married (56.8%), while smaller proportions were single (17.1%), in common-law marriages (15.5%), separated (5.9%), widowed (2.9%), or divorced (1.9%). This highlights that the majority of participants had access to spousal and family support, which is often a critical factor influencing postpartum care and breastfeeding practices.

In terms of educational attainment, respondents exhibited a diverse range of schooling levels. The largest groups had completed high school (27.5%) or college (25.1%), followed by vocational training (21.9%), elementary education (14.4%), postgraduate studies (6.9%), and a small proportion who had never attended school

(4.3%). This diversity in education suggests variation in health literacy, access to breastfeeding information, and the capacity to integrate traditional and biomedical knowledge. With respect to religion, nearly half of the respondents identified as Buddhist (46.1%), while smaller proportions were Muslim (22.7%), Christian (18.9%), or followed other religions (12.3%). Religious affiliation may shape postpartum practices, dietary habits, and culturally guided breastfeeding behaviors, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive interventions.

Finally, employment status showed that full-time employment was most common (52.3%), followed by unemployment (24.5%) and part-time work (23.2%). Employment type has implications for breastfeeding practices, as full-time working mothers may face challenges in maintaining exclusive breastfeeding due to time constraints, workplace conditions, and maternity leave limitations. Overall, the demographic profile indicates a predominantly young, married, and moderately educated population, with diverse religious affiliations and varying employment statuses. These characteristics provide essential context for interpreting breastfeeding behaviors, postpartum practices, and maternal motivation, emphasizing the need for interventions tailored to different age groups, education levels, and work situations while being sensitive to cultural and religious norms.

The demographic profile suggests that the study population is diverse in age, marital status, religious affiliation, employment, and education, reflecting the heterogeneity of maternal experiences in Vietnam. These characteristics have significant implications for breastfeeding motivation and adherence: Younger mothers may benefit more from digital and community-based interventions, while older mothers may require culturally resonant approaches that respect traditional practices. Meanwhile, married mothers with strong family support may be more likely to adhere to exclusive breastfeeding recommendations, whereas single or cohabiting mothers may need additional institutional support. Furthermore, religious affiliation shapes dietary and postpartum behaviors, highlighting the need for culturally congruent messaging in breastfeeding promotion programs. Additionally, full-time employment and economic demands may challenge adherence to exclusive breastfeeding, emphasizing the importance of workplace policies and flexible maternal leave. Educational level influences the ability to integrate biomedical guidance with traditional practices, suggesting that targeted education programs are necessary to bridge gaps in knowledge and practice.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide a contextual lens for interpreting behavioral, psychosocial, and cultural findings. Understanding these characteristics is critical for designing glocalized, context-specific breastfeeding interventions that accommodate diverse maternal profiles while leveraging family, community, and technological support structures.

**Table 2**

*Assessment of Vietnamese Mother Respondents on Their Traditional Beliefs in Breastfeeding Care*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
Philosophical Factors	3.35	Strongly Agree
Kinship and Social Factors	3.22	Agree
Political and Legal Factors	3.25	Agree
Economic and Education Factors	3.31	Strongly Agree
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 2 presents the assessment of Vietnamese mother-respondents regarding their adherence to traditional beliefs influencing breastfeeding care. The results indicate a generally high level of agreement with traditional and culturally grounded factors. Among the subdomains: philosophical Factors received a mean score of 3.35, interpreted as Strongly Agree, indicating that mothers strongly endorsed beliefs rooted in religious, moral, or cultural philosophies that guide postpartum behavior and infant feeding. Kinship and Social Factors scored 3.22 (Agree), reflecting that family and social networks, particularly elders and female relatives, play a significant role in shaping breastfeeding practices, though slightly less strongly than philosophical factors. Political and Legal Factors had a mean of 3.25 (Agree), suggesting that trust in government programs, health policies, and guidance from community health workers influences maternal practices. Economic and Educational Factors scored 3.31

(Strongly Agree), highlighting that mothers consider economic capacity and educational background when making decisions about breastfeeding care.

The overall mean of 3.28 falls within the Strongly Agree category, indicating that, collectively, Vietnamese mothers demonstrate strong adherence to traditional beliefs when it comes to breastfeeding care. This suggests that cultural, familial, and structural factors are highly valued and actively shape maternal decision-making, consistent with prior studies showing that traditional postpartum beliefs and intergenerational influences significantly affect breastfeeding practices in Vietnam (Sankar et al., 2020). These findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive interventions that respect philosophical and family-driven beliefs while integrating modern biomedical guidance, as mothers actively negotiate between tradition and contemporary health recommendations.

Mothers reported strong adherence to technological, religious, kinship, and economic factors influencing breastfeeding. Online resources and digital health materials supported decision-making (technological). Religious beliefs guided dietary choices for maternal strength and milk production (religious/philosophical). Family support from mothers, mothers-in-law, and other female relatives was prominent (kinship/social). Trust in government programs and community health workers also contributed to confidence in breastfeeding (political/legal). Employment and economic demands presented challenges to exclusive breastfeeding (economic/educational). Weighted means indicated moderate to high adherence to traditional beliefs.

Vietnamese mothers reported strong adherence to a constellation of factors—technological, religious/philosophical, kinship/social, political/legal, and economic/educational—that influence breastfeeding practices. Weighted means reflecting moderate to high adherence suggest that traditional beliefs and structural influences continue to shape maternal decisions, even as mothers negotiate modern pressures and knowledge sources. This multidimensional adherence underscores the complexity of breastfeeding motivation, highlighting the interplay between culture, family structures, societal expectations, and global health messaging.

Mothers' use of online resources and digital health materials demonstrates the integration of modern technology into breastfeeding decision-making. Access to social media groups, official health websites, and mobile applications enables mothers to obtain timely information on breastfeeding techniques, nutrition, and postpartum care (Smith et al., 2021). This supports prior findings in Vietnam, where digital health platforms have been increasingly leveraged to supplement formal healthcare guidance (Binns et al., 2020). Technological engagement enhances maternal confidence and autonomy, allowing mothers to cross-reference professional recommendations with family advice and traditional practices. From a theoretical standpoint, this reflects the self-directed learning component of social cognitive theory, where observational learning and vicarious information sources strengthen maternal self-efficacy and motivation (Bandura, 1997).

Religious and philosophical beliefs strongly guided dietary choices and postpartum behaviors, including the consumption of foods believed to enhance maternal strength, recovery, and milk production. These practices align with longstanding Vietnamese and broader Southeast Asian traditions, where spiritual and moral frameworks influence health behaviors (Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2021). Religious guidance functions as both a behavioral compass and motivational anchor, reinforcing adherence to culturally sanctioned postpartum routines while simultaneously supporting optimal breastfeeding. For instance, mothers may perceive certain foods as spiritually or morally “strengthening,” increasing confidence in their ability to produce sufficient milk. These findings resonate with cultural models theory, which posits that health behaviors are embedded in shared symbolic systems that shape both action and motivation.

The prominent role of family support, particularly from mothers, mothers-in-law, and other female relatives, underscores the intergenerational negotiation inherent in Vietnamese postpartum care. Kinship networks provide guidance on infant feeding, reinforce traditional dietary practices, and offer practical support with household responsibilities. This finding aligns with prior research demonstrating that Vietnamese grandmothers often serve as key advisors on breastfeeding and may both facilitate and constrain exclusive breastfeeding depending on their interpretations of tradition (Chowdhury et al., 2021). The observed adherence indicates that mothers do not make

decisions in isolation; rather, they operate within socially structured decision-making systems, consistent with social ecological theory, where interpersonal influences significantly shape health behaviors.

Trust in government programs and community health workers emerged as an important contributor to maternal confidence. Mothers’ adherence to recommended breastfeeding practices was reinforced by state-led initiatives, such as the national Maternal and Child Health program, which provides guidance on early initiation, exclusive breastfeeding, and nutrition. These findings illustrate the role of macro-level institutional support in legitimizing and sustaining maternal behavior. While prior studies have documented policy adoption in Vietnam, uneven implementation and local adaptation have limited impact (Taft, 2025). The present findings suggest that institutional trust can enhance adherence, particularly when state guidance is mediated through trusted health workers embedded in the community.

Mothers’ economic and employment demands presented notable challenges to exclusive breastfeeding, particularly among working mothers or those with limited access to workplace lactation support. These structural constraints reflect the intersection of socioeconomic factors with cultural and personal motivations. While mothers may maintain strong belief in the importance of breastfeeding, practical limitations such as maternity leave duration, workplace accommodations, and economic pressures can compromise exclusivity and duration. These results corroborate earlier research showing that employment and income demands are significant predictors of early supplementation and cessation of exclusive breastfeeding in Vietnam (Chetwynd, 2022).

Weighted mean analysis showing moderate to high adherence across these domains suggests that Vietnamese mothers actively negotiate between traditional beliefs, family expectations, institutional guidance, and modern technological resources. The integration of these influences highlights the hybridized, glocalized nature of breastfeeding motivation in contemporary Vietnam. Mothers leverage multiple sources of information—family advice, religious norms, digital resources, and policy recommendations—while balancing practical constraints such as employment and economic demands.

Overall, the strong adherence to technological, religious, kinship, political, and economic factors illustrates that breastfeeding motivation among Vietnamese mothers is contextually situated, multidimensional, and highly adaptive. These findings reinforce the need for glocalized, culturally informed interventions that integrate traditional knowledge, family support, institutional trust, and modern technology to support sustained and exclusive breastfeeding.

**Table 3**  
*Assessment of Vietnamese Mother Respondents on Their Traditional Practices in Breastfeeding Care*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
Hygienic Care	3.17	Agree
Breastfeeding and Baby Care	3.23	Agree
Dietary Modifications	3.34	Strongly Agree
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 presents the assessment of Vietnamese mother-respondents regarding their engagement in traditional practices related to breastfeeding care. The findings indicate that mothers consistently follow culturally informed practices, though the level of adherence varies across specific behaviors. Hygienic Care received a mean score of 3.17 (Agree), showing that mothers generally maintain cleanliness in the postpartum period to prevent infection and protect maternal and infant health. This aligns with traditional Vietnamese postpartum practices that emphasize sanitation in both maternal and newborn care environments. Breastfeeding and Baby Care had a mean of 3.23 (Agree), indicating that mothers regularly engage in behaviors that safeguard the infant during feeding, such as proper positioning, monitoring infant cues, and following recommended breastfeeding routines. These practices reflect a combination of traditional knowledge and modern health guidance. Dietary Modifications scored 3.34 (Strongly Agree), demonstrating the highest level of adherence among the three domains. Mothers reported

following culturally prescribed dietary practices aimed at enhancing maternal recovery, promoting lactation, and supporting infant nutrition. Family advice, religious beliefs, and traditional philosophies strongly guide these dietary behaviors, consistent with prior studies showing the centrality of postpartum diets in Vietnamese breastfeeding culture (Poh et al., 2025).

The overall mean of 3.25 (Agree) indicates that Vietnamese mothers actively engage in traditional practices related to breastfeeding care, particularly emphasizing dietary modifications. These findings suggest that, while hygienic care and infant care are consistently practiced, mothers place especially strong importance on culturally sanctioned dietary routines, reflecting the integration of traditional beliefs with daily caregiving. Collectively, these results highlight that Vietnamese mothers do not merely hold traditional beliefs—they translate these beliefs into actionable practices, which have direct implications for breastfeeding outcomes. Understanding these practices is essential for designing culturally responsive breastfeeding interventions that support both maternal adherence and infant health.

Participants engaged in consistent hygienic care, breastfeeding/baby care, and dietary modifications. Hygienic practices included maintaining clean environments to prevent infection. Breastfeeding and baby care focused on protecting the newborn during feeding, while dietary modifications were guided by family advice, including lactation-promoting foods. Hygienic care emerged as a central postpartum practice, encompassing routines such as maintaining clean home and infant environments, careful hand hygiene, and protection against perceived environmental threats. Participants' focus on hygiene reflects deep-seated cultural beliefs about maternal and infant vulnerability during the postpartum period, which are widely documented in Vietnamese ethnographic studies (Victoria et al., 2021). In traditional Vietnamese postpartum care, mothers are considered especially susceptible to infections and “imbalances” in the body, making environmental cleanliness a moral and practical responsibility.

From a behavioral standpoint, these hygienic practices are not merely ritualistic; they function as motivational reinforcers for breastfeeding behavior. By creating a safe and controlled environment, mothers gain confidence in the health and well-being of their infants, which may support more frequent and sustained breastfeeding sessions. This aligns with the broader concept of self-efficacy in maternal care, where perceived competence in caregiving strengthens adherence to recommended practices. Moreover, hygienic care can be seen as a culturally consonant mechanism that allows mothers to integrate biomedical principles into traditional postpartum logic, demonstrating a form of glocalization in health behavior.

The second domain, breastfeeding and baby care, reflects behaviors specifically aimed at protecting and nurturing the infant during feeding. Participants emphasized proper positioning, responsive feeding, and careful monitoring of infant health. These practices were often reinforced by elder female relatives, illustrating the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and the continuing influence of kinship networks in Vietnamese maternal care (Kalhor et al., 2025).

The emphasis on protective feeding practices demonstrates that breastfeeding is conceptualized not only as a nutritional act but also as a ritualized, culturally meaningful form of infant care. This reinforces findings from Mendelson (2024), who observed that Vietnamese mothers often negotiate between biomedical advice and culturally informed practices, selectively integrating behaviors that enhance perceived infant safety. These practices also serve as behavioral cues that reinforce maternal motivation, as successful breastfeeding and perceived infant wellness provide immediate feedback and positive reinforcement for continued adherence.

Dietary practices were guided heavily by family advice and traditional postpartum beliefs, emphasizing lactation-promoting foods (e.g., soups, herbs) and restrictions on certain “cold” or “harmful” foods. This aligns with prior studies documenting the Vietnamese concept of “hot-cold” food balance and the belief that maternal diet directly affects milk quality and infant health. These dietary behaviors serve both symbolic and functional purposes: they reinforce cultural identity and familial support structures, while also providing nutritional benefits that may facilitate lactation.

Interestingly, dietary modifications operate as both motivational and regulatory mechanisms for breastfeeding. By adhering to prescribed dietary routines, mothers experience a sense of control and compliance with cultural expectations, which strengthens their confidence in their ability to breastfeed successfully. These behaviors also demonstrate the dynamic negotiation between traditional knowledge and modern biomedical guidance, illustrating the hybridization of postpartum care. Mothers selectively incorporate practices that are culturally sanctioned yet compatible with contemporary health recommendations, reflecting the glocalized nature of breastfeeding in Vietnam. The consistent engagement in these three domains illustrates that traditional practices are both culturally embedded and functionally adaptive, supporting maternal motivation and infant health. Hygienic care, feeding practices, and dietary modifications are mutually reinforcing: hygienic care creates a safe environment, feeding practices ensure effective infant nutrition, and dietary modifications promote maternal recovery and lactation. Together, these practices highlight the synergistic role of cultural beliefs, family influence, and individual agency in sustaining breastfeeding motivation.

From a programmatic perspective, these findings support the need for culturally sensitive breastfeeding interventions. Rather than discouraging traditional postpartum behaviors, health programs can leverage existing practices as entry points for education, framing biomedical recommendations in ways that complement and validate traditional routines. For example, dietary guidance can incorporate recommended lactation foods while respecting culturally sanctioned restrictions, and hygiene messaging can build upon existing maternal routines rather than imposing unfamiliar protocols. Furthermore, these findings underscore the importance of intergenerational engagement in breastfeeding promotion. Given the influence of elder female relatives on hygiene, feeding, and diet, interventions targeting mothers alone may be insufficient. Programs that actively involve grandmothers and mothers-in-law may enhance both acceptability and sustainability of breastfeeding practices.

**Table 4**

*Assessment of Vietnamese Mother Respondents on Their Traditional Motivations in Breastfeeding Care*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
Mindset	3.07	Agree
Feelings	3.27	Agree
Exercise	3.20	Agree
Nutrition	3.36	Strongly Agree
Self-Confidence	3.10	Agree
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 4 presents the assessment of Vietnamese mother-respondents regarding their traditional motivations influencing breastfeeding care. The results indicate that mothers are generally motivated to engage in breastfeeding and postpartum practices, with particular emphasis on nutrition. Mindset scored 3.07 (Agree), suggesting that mothers maintain a positive attitude toward breastfeeding, prioritizing comfort and well-being over appearance, and approaching maternal responsibilities with a constructive outlook. Feelings received a mean of 3.27 (Agree), reflecting that mothers are sensitive to social perceptions, emotional well-being, and relational dynamics, which influence their breastfeeding behaviors. Emotional awareness appears to motivate adherence to recommended practices while navigating family expectations. Exercise scored 3.20 (Agree), indicating that mothers incorporate physical activity into their postpartum routine to regain pre-pregnancy form and maintain personal health, which indirectly supports breastfeeding through improved physical well-being and self-efficacy. Nutrition had the highest mean score of 3.36 (Strongly Agree), showing that mothers place strong emphasis on consuming foods that support both maternal recovery and infant growth. This highlights the centrality of dietary practices as a motivating factor for sustained breastfeeding, consistent with the high adherence to dietary modifications observed in Table 3. Self-Confidence scored 3.10 (Agree), suggesting that mothers demonstrate confidence in making healthy decisions for themselves and their infants, including decisions about breastfeeding practices, dietary intake, and engagement with both traditional and biomedical guidance. The overall mean of 3.20 (Agree) indicates that Vietnamese mothers are motivated by a combination of cognitive, emotional, physical, nutritional, and self-efficacy factors, with

nutrition emerging as the strongest motivating factor. These findings suggest that motivations for breastfeeding are multidimensional, integrating personal health, family expectations, cultural beliefs, and social norms. This multidimensional motivation reflects the interplay of traditional beliefs, practices, and modern influences, emphasizing the need for interventions that support mothers holistically—addressing emotional well-being, nutrition, self-confidence, and culturally informed practices to promote sustained breastfeeding adherence.

Mothers reported prioritizing comfort over appearance (mindset), acknowledging social perception changes (feelings), performing exercise to regain pre-pregnancy form (exercise), emphasizing nutrition for mother and infant (nutrition), and demonstrating confidence in making healthy decisions (self-confidence). Breastfeeding-related behaviors and postpartum adaptations extend beyond caregiving practices to encompass psychosocial and self-care domains, including mindset, emotional experiences, exercise, nutrition, and self-confidence. These dimensions reflect an interplay of individual agency, cultural norms, and social expectations, highlighting the multi-layered nature of maternal motivation in contemporary Vietnam.

Mothers consistently reported prioritizing personal comfort over physical appearance, suggesting a shift in postpartum self-perception. This mindset may facilitate breastfeeding adherence by reducing external pressures and allowing mothers to focus on the practicalities of feeding and caregiving. From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with self-determination theory, where intrinsic motivation—here, prioritizing comfort and maternal well-being—enhances sustained engagement in health behaviors (Binns et al., 2020). In the Vietnamese context, where cultural norms often valorize family roles and physical presentation, mothers' willingness to prioritize comfort reflects a negotiation between social expectations and individual needs, enabling them to center breastfeeding and infant care as primary objectives.

Mothers acknowledged changes in social perception following childbirth, including awareness of how family, peers, and community may judge their appearance, behaviors, and maternal performance. These feelings illustrate the social embeddedness of postpartum experience, consistent with studies in Vietnam that highlight the influence of kinship and community norms on maternal behavior (Alimi et al., 2021). Emotional awareness of social perception can operate both as a motivator and a constraint: while it may encourage mothers to adhere to culturally sanctioned practices, excessive concern about judgment could lead to stress or compromise maternal confidence. Recognizing these feelings is essential for designing interventions that validate maternal experiences while supporting autonomy in breastfeeding and self-care.

Engagement in exercise to restore pre-pregnancy physical form reflects mothers' proactive approach to body recovery and self-efficacy. Exercise serves multiple purposes: it supports physical health, reduces postpartum fatigue, and enhances body image satisfaction, all of which contribute indirectly to breastfeeding sustainability. This aligns with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which posits that mastery experiences—such as successfully engaging in exercise—enhance confidence in one's ability to perform related behaviors, including infant care and feeding. In Vietnam, where postpartum confinement practices may limit mobility, mothers' participation in exercise may reflect a modernized adaptation of traditional routines, blending cultural expectations with personal health goals (Giang et al., 2023).

Nutrition was consistently prioritized, with mothers emphasizing foods that support both maternal recovery and infant health. This aligns with long-standing Vietnamese postpartum beliefs regarding “hot” and “cold” foods, lactation-enhancing diets, and maternal replenishment (Alwusaydi et al., 2021). Importantly, participants' focus on nutrition demonstrates an integration of traditional knowledge and contemporary health awareness, reflecting glocalized practices where mothers actively select dietary strategies that are both culturally sanctioned and empirically informed. Nutritional prioritization also functions as a motivational mechanism, signaling maternal agency in promoting optimal infant outcomes while caring for one's own health.

Mothers demonstrated confidence in making healthy decisions for themselves and their infants, suggesting a strong sense of agency and internal locus of control. This self-confidence likely mediates the translation of knowledge, beliefs, and practices into sustained breastfeeding behavior. In line with social cognitive theory, self-

confidence enables mothers to negotiate conflicting advice from family members, reconcile traditional practices with biomedical guidance, and persist in optimal feeding routines despite social pressures (Chowdhury et al., 2021). In the Vietnamese cultural context, where family elders often exert substantial influence over infant care, self-confidence empowers mothers to advocate for practices aligned with both personal judgment and professional recommendations, highlighting a critical intersection between tradition and modern health literacy.

Collectively, these psychosocial and behavioral domains underscore the multi-dimensional nature of maternal adaptation in the postpartum period. Mindset, feelings, exercise, nutrition, and self-confidence function interactively, shaping both maternal motivation and behavioral execution. For example, prioritizing comfort (mindset) may reduce stress, which supports engagement in breastfeeding and exercise; awareness of social perception (feelings) may heighten adherence to culturally accepted nutritional practices; and self-confidence facilitates negotiation between traditional advice and evidence-based guidelines.

In summary, the psychosocial dimensions of mindset, feelings, exercise, nutrition, and self-confidence illustrate how Vietnamese mothers actively navigate the postpartum period, balancing cultural expectations with personal health priorities. These dimensions operate synergistically to reinforce breastfeeding motivation, highlighting the importance of interventions that support maternal agency, culturally grounded practices, and self-efficacy.

**Table 5**

*Multiple Regression Analysis of Traditional Motivations with Dimensions of Traditional Beliefs and Traditional Practices in Breastfeeding Care of the Vietnamese Mother Respondents*

<b>Predictors</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Traditional Beliefs</b>					
(Constant)	.510	.188		4.288	.000
Technological Factors	.366	.096	.315	6.520	.000
Religious and Philosophical Factors	.288	.112	.275	4.622	.000
Kinship and Social Factors	.176	.074	.202	3.911	.000
Political and Legal Factors	.161	.056	.284	5.636	.000
Economic and Educational Factors	.308	.126	.298	4.781	.000
R <sup>2</sup> = .775, F = 86.105, Sig = .000					
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001					
<b>Predictors</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Traditional Practices</b>					
(Constant)	1.402	.085		16.540	.000
Hygienic Care	.138	.029	.280	4.706	.000
Breastfeeding and Baby Care	.170	.034	.326	5.022	.000
Dietary Modifications	.153	.031	.296	4.092	.000
R <sup>2</sup> = .694, F = 73.709, Sig = .000					
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001					

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which dimensions of traditional beliefs and traditional practices predict traditional motivations in breastfeeding care among Vietnamese mother respondents. Regression analyses confirmed significant positive relationships among beliefs, practices, and motivations (p < 0.05), indicating that culturally grounded beliefs strongly influence maternal practices and intrinsic motivations. The overall traditional beliefs and traditional practices were statistically significant, indicating that the selected predictors meaningfully explain variation in traditional breastfeeding motivations.

For traditional beliefs, the regression model was highly significant,  $F(5, *) = 86.105, p < .001$ , and accounted for 77.5% of the variance in traditional motivations ( $R^2 = .775$ ). This indicates a strong explanatory power of

belief-related dimensions in shaping breastfeeding motivations. All five predictors were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), suggesting that technological, religious and philosophical, kinship and social, political and legal, and economic and educational factors independently contribute to traditional breastfeeding motivations.

Among these predictors, technological factors emerged as one of the strongest contributors ( $\beta = .315, t = 6.520, p < .001$ ), highlighting the role of access to and perceptions of health-related technologies and information in shaping traditional beliefs. Economic and educational factors also demonstrated a substantial influence ( $\beta = .298, p < .001$ ), indicating that mothers' socioeconomic positioning and educational exposure interact with traditional belief systems rather than displacing them. Political and legal factors ( $\beta = .284, p < .001$ ) and religious and philosophical factors ( $\beta = .275, p < .001$ ) further underscore the importance of broader structural and ideological contexts in reinforcing traditional breastfeeding beliefs. Kinship and social factors, while comparatively smaller in effect size ( $\beta = .202, p < .001$ ), remained a significant predictor, reflecting the continuing influence of family and social networks on maternal motivations.

For traditional practices, the regression model was likewise statistically significant,  $F(3, *) = 73.709, p < .001$ , explaining 69.4% of the variance in traditional breastfeeding motivations ( $R^2 = .694$ ). All practice-related predictors were significant at  $p < .001$ , confirming that concrete postpartum behaviors are strongly associated with motivational orientations toward breastfeeding.

Among the practice dimensions, breastfeeding and baby care practices had the strongest standardized effect ( $\beta = .326, t = 5.022$ ), suggesting that hands-on caregiving routines play a central role in reinforcing traditional motivations. Dietary modifications ( $\beta = .296, p < .001$ ) also showed a robust association, highlighting the cultural importance of postpartum nutrition in breastfeeding care. Hygienic care practices ( $\beta = .280, p < .001$ ), while slightly less influential, remained a significant predictor, reflecting culturally embedded beliefs about maternal and infant vulnerability during the postpartum period.

Study findings indicate that traditional motivations in breastfeeding among Vietnamese mothers are strongly shaped by both belief systems and everyday caregiving practices, with belief-based factors showing slightly greater explanatory power than practice-based factors. The high  $R^2$  values across both models suggest that traditional motivations are deeply embedded within broader sociocultural, structural, and experiential contexts. These results reinforce the need for breastfeeding interventions in Vietnam to move beyond biomedical messaging and engage meaningfully with traditional belief systems and culturally grounded practices that continue to shape maternal behavior.

## 5. Discussion

The study highlights the centrality of cultural, social, and familial factors in shaping breastfeeding practices among Vietnamese mothers. Young, married, Buddhist, and employed mothers with moderate to high educational levels dominated the population. Traditional beliefs, including reliance on online health information, religious dietary guidance, and family support, strongly influenced practices and motivations. Demographic differences suggest the need for tailored interventions: younger mothers may benefit from educational support, unmarried mothers from social and emotional resources, and employed mothers from flexible workplace policies. Strong interrelationships among beliefs, practices, and motivations highlight the importance of culturally integrated breastfeeding programs.

The findings demonstrate that traditional motivations for breastfeeding are deeply embedded within broader sociocultural, structural, and experiential contexts, rather than being driven solely by individual knowledge or biomedical guidance. The high explanatory power of both regression models underscores the continued relevance of traditional belief systems and postpartum practices in shaping maternal breastfeeding behavior in contemporary Vietnam.

With regard to traditional beliefs and breastfeeding motivations, the results indicate that dimensions of

traditional beliefs collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in breastfeeding motivations ( $R^2 = .775$ ), suggesting that belief-based factors play a central role in motivating maternal breastfeeding practices. Technological factors emerged as one of the strongest predictors, highlighting how access to health information, medical technologies, and modern communication channels intersects with traditional belief systems rather than replacing them. This finding aligns with Vietnamese studies showing that mothers often integrate biomedical advice from health professionals with culturally grounded beliefs, selectively adopting information that resonates with traditional understandings of maternal and infant health (Prabasari & Rukmini, 2025).

Economic and educational factors also demonstrated a strong association with traditional breastfeeding motivations, supporting previous evidence that socioeconomic advancement in Vietnam does not necessarily diminish traditional practices but may instead reshape how they are interpreted and applied (Mendelson, 2025). This challenges assumptions embedded in knowledge-deficit models, which posit that increased education leads to reduced reliance on traditional beliefs. Instead, the findings suggest a hybrid model in which education and economic resources coexist with, and sometimes reinforce, culturally grounded motivations for breastfeeding.

Political and legal factors were likewise significant predictors, reflecting the broader policy environment in Vietnam, where state-endorsed maternal and child health programs coexist with long-standing cultural norms. While Vietnam has implemented strong breastfeeding policies aligned with World Health Organization recommendations (Smith et al., 2021), the present findings suggest that policy influence operates indirectly, interacting with cultural and social beliefs rather than acting as a primary motivational driver. Religious and philosophical factors further underscore the role of culturally shared meanings related to bodily balance, maternal responsibility, and infant protection—concepts well documented in Vietnamese postpartum (Sankar et al., 2020).

Kinship and social factors, though exhibiting comparatively smaller effect sizes, remained significant predictors of breastfeeding motivations. This finding is consistent with Vietnamese literature highlighting the influential role of family members—particularly grandmothers and mothers-in-law—in shaping infant feeding decisions (Kalhor et al., 2025). The results reinforce the idea that breastfeeding motivations are not formed in isolation but are negotiated within intergenerational family structures.

With regard to traditional practices and breastfeeding motivations, the regression analysis for traditional practices also demonstrated strong explanatory power ( $R^2 = .694$ ), confirming that everyday postpartum behaviors are closely linked to maternal breastfeeding motivations. Among the practice-related predictors, breastfeeding and baby care practices showed the strongest association, emphasizing the importance of routine caregiving behaviors in reinforcing breastfeeding motivation. This finding aligns with qualitative studies in Vietnam that describe how hands-on practices, such as proper positioning, infant soothing, and responsive feeding, strengthen maternal confidence and commitment to breastfeeding (Kalhor, 2025).

Dietary modifications were also a significant predictor, reflecting the central role of postpartum nutrition in Vietnamese cultural beliefs about milk production and maternal recovery. Traditional dietary prescriptions—often guided by “hot” and “cold” food classifications—have been shown to influence breastfeeding duration and maternal confidence, even when they conflict with biomedical advice (Chowdhury et al., 2021). The persistence of dietary practices as a motivational factor supports arguments that culturally embedded behaviors remain influential even in urbanizing and modernizing contexts.

Hygienic care practices, while slightly less influential, were nonetheless significant, highlighting cultural beliefs surrounding maternal and infant vulnerability during the postpartum period. Restrictions on bathing, exposure to cold, and environmental cleanliness have been widely documented in Vietnam and are often viewed as essential for protecting both mother and infant (Mendelson, 2024). The association between hygienic practices and breastfeeding motivations suggests that these rituals may provide a sense of security and control that supports sustained breastfeeding.

The findings of this study support the application of social ecological theory, which emphasizes the interaction

of individual, interpersonal, community, and institutional influences on health behaviors. The strong effects of belief-based and practice-based predictors demonstrate that breastfeeding motivations are shaped across multiple levels, from individual knowledge to family dynamics and broader sociopolitical contexts. Moreover, the results resonate with cultural models and medical anthropology perspectives, which conceptualize health behaviors as embedded in shared meanings and lived experiences (Taft, 2025).

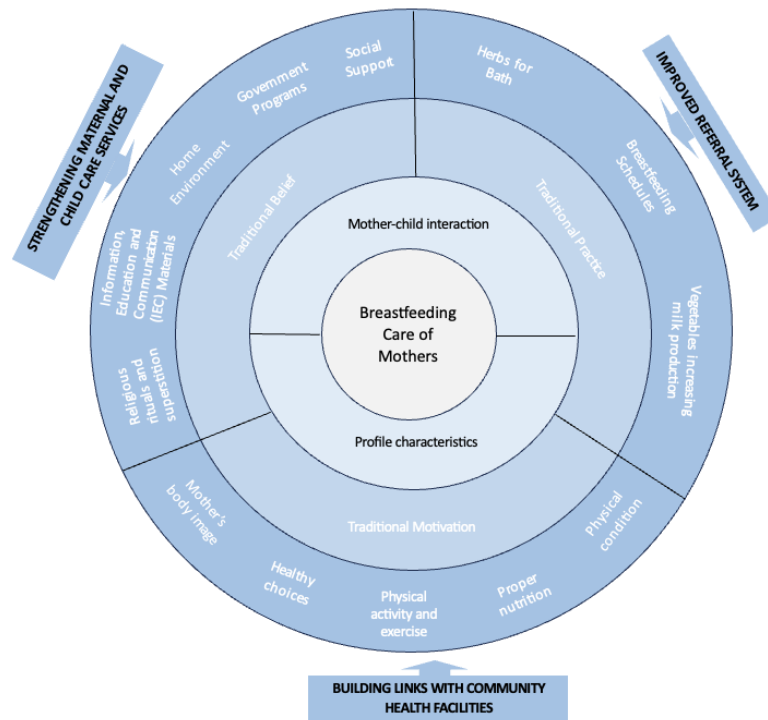
Importantly, the findings address a gap in the Vietnamese literature, which has been dominated by cross-sectional surveys emphasizing prevalence and biomedical correlates (Binns et al., 2020). By empirically demonstrating the strength of traditional beliefs and practices as predictors of breastfeeding motivation, this study moves beyond treating culture as a static background variable and instead highlights its active role in shaping maternal behavior. The results suggest that breastfeeding interventions in Vietnam should move beyond information dissemination and engage more deeply with traditional belief systems and caregiving practices. Programs that fail to acknowledge family influence, dietary traditions, and postpartum rituals may struggle to resonate with mothers' lived experiences. Conversely, culturally responsive interventions that work collaboratively with families and community structures may be more effective in sustaining optimal breastfeeding practices.

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the development and application of a Glocalized Breastfeeding Program Framework, which integrates global breastfeeding standards with locally embedded cultural beliefs, practices, and social structures. "Glocalization" emphasizes the adaptation of universal health recommendations to local contexts, allowing global evidence-based guidelines—such as those promoted by the World Health Organization (2022)—to be interpreted and implemented in culturally meaningful ways. In the Vietnamese context, where traditional postpartum beliefs and practices remain highly influential, a glocalized approach offers a pragmatic and culturally respectful pathway to improving breastfeeding outcomes.

The strong predictive power of traditional beliefs and practices observed in this study underscores the limitations of purely biomedical or knowledge-deficit approaches to breastfeeding promotion. While global breastfeeding programs emphasize early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, the present findings demonstrate that Vietnamese mothers' motivations are significantly shaped by technological, religious-philosophical, kinship, political, and economic belief systems, as well as by concrete caregiving practices such as dietary modification, hygienic care, and infant feeding routines. A glocalized framework acknowledges these influences not as barriers, but as entry points for intervention.

From a theoretical perspective, the glocalized framework aligns closely with social ecological theory, which conceptualizes breastfeeding behavior as the product of interactions across multiple levels—individual, interpersonal, community, and institutional. At the individual level, mothers' motivations are informed by both biomedical knowledge and traditional understandings of maternal and infant health. At the interpersonal level, kinship structures, particularly the influence of grandmothers and mothers-in-law, play a central role in shaping breastfeeding decisions. At the community and institutional levels, health systems, policy environments, and access to technology interact with cultural norms to reinforce or modify breastfeeding practices. The glocalized framework integrates these levels by promoting coherence between global policy goals and local lived realities.

Importantly, the framework also draws on cultural models and medical anthropology, which emphasize that health behaviors are embedded within shared meanings and moral obligations. Vietnamese postpartum practices—such as dietary prescriptions and hygienic rituals—are not merely habitual behaviors but are deeply tied to beliefs about bodily balance, maternal vulnerability, and infant protection. The present study's findings suggest that when breastfeeding promotion efforts fail to engage with these meanings, they risk alienating mothers and families. A glocalized framework instead seeks to reframe global breastfeeding recommendations in ways that align with existing cultural logics, such as positioning exclusive breastfeeding as a practice that enhances maternal recovery and infant strength within traditional belief systems.



### Proposed Glocalized Breastfeeding Program Framework

In practical terms, a Glocalized Breastfeeding Program Framework would involve culturally adaptive intervention strategies, including the engagement of family members in breastfeeding education, the incorporation of acceptable traditional practices that do not conflict with biomedical guidance, and the contextualization of health messages using locally meaningful language and symbols. For example, dietary guidance could acknowledge traditional postpartum foods while emphasizing their compatibility with adequate milk production, and hygienic practices could be discussed in ways that respect concerns about vulnerability while promoting evidence-based care.

The framework also addresses a critical gap identified in the Vietnamese literature—the disconnect between global breastfeeding policies and local implementation. While Vietnam has adopted robust breastfeeding policies, uneven adherence suggests that policy translation remains a challenge. A glocalized approach offers a mechanism for bridging this gap by fostering collaboration between health professionals, community leaders, and families, thereby enhancing acceptability and sustainability.

In summary, the Glocalized Breastfeeding Program Framework provides a theoretically grounded and empirically supported model for breastfeeding promotion in Vietnam. By harmonizing global health recommendations with local cultural beliefs and practices, the framework responds directly to the study’s findings and offers a culturally congruent pathway for strengthening breastfeeding motivation and practice. Future research should evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of glocalized interventions across diverse Vietnamese settings, including rural, urban, and ethnically diverse communities.

## 6. Conclusions

Vietnamese mothers’ breastfeeding behaviors are influenced by traditional beliefs, practices, and motivations, which are interconnected and shaped by demographic factors. Young, married, Buddhist, and employed mothers with high school or college education predominated. Cultural, familial, and social contexts played a critical role in maternal practices and motivations. Differences across age, marital status, education, religion, and employment underscore the need for culturally tailored interventions.

**Recommendations** - Breastfeeding support for Vietnamese mothers should combine cultural relevance with evidence-based guidance. Digital platforms can be used to disseminate culturally tailored information, while mothers are encouraged to balance traditional and religious practices with scientifically supported recommendations. Active engagement of family support networks during postpartum recovery enhances practical and emotional assistance. Community and government programs should be promoted to provide accessible resources and guidance. Maintaining hygienic home environments and following lactation-supportive diets are essential, alongside scheduled and exclusive breastfeeding practices. Maternal physical and emotional well-being should be supported through exercise, proper nutrition, and confidence-building. Ultimately, mothers should be empowered to make informed decisions that promote the health of both themselves and their infants.

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## Gastronomic framework of local cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigated the gastronomic framework of local cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, by examining culturally rooted dishes, gastronomic identity, tourist motivations, and the development of a systems-based gastronomic model for culinary tourism. The research addressed the need to understand how local culinary resources and traditions contribute to tourism experiences and community identity in a coastal municipality. A sequential mixed-method research design was employed, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions and cultural mapping to identify unique local dishes, ingredients, culinary practices, and food traditions. Quantitative data were collected through a survey of 191 local tourists, using a five-point Likert scale to assess motivational factors influencing engagement with local cuisine. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis for qualitative responses and weighted mean and ranking for quantitative results. Findings revealed that seafood resources, coconut-based ingredients, and traditional Bicolano cooking practices strongly influence Calabanga's cuisine. Common dishes such as tiniktik, ginataang seafood, gulay na natong, and traditional delicacies reflect the municipality's coastal environment and agricultural resources. Culinary traditions are largely preserved through family practices and intergenerational transmission of recipes. Visitors also associate Calabanga's gastronomic identity with community hospitality, fiestas, and shared dining experiences. Among the identified motivational factors, curiosity and experience motivation ranked highest ( $M = 4.54$ ), indicating that tourists are strongly motivated to discover unfamiliar dishes and explore new culinary experiences. Other factors, including food-related activities ( $M = 4.26$ ), food involvement ( $M = 4.25$ ), social motivation ( $M = 4.22$ ), cultural and nostalgic motivation ( $M = 4.20$ ), and gastronomic or sensory motivation ( $M = 4.11$ ), also showed strong influence. Based on these findings, the study proposed a Systems-Based Gastronomic Framework composed of three interconnected components: production, processing, and consumption. Production represents the culinary resource base derived from coastal seafood and coconut agriculture; processing represents the cultural transmission of culinary knowledge through traditional cooking practices; and consumption represents tourism

engagement and market interaction through food experiences. The study concludes that Calabanga's gastronomy functions as a community-based cultural system where ecological resources, cultural traditions, and tourism activities interact to sustain local culinary identity and support sustainable tourism development.

**Keywords:** Calabanga cuisines, cultural gastronomy, food tourism, gastronomic framework

## Gastronomic framework of local cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur

### 1. Introduction

Food is more than a basic human necessity; it is a cultural artifact that reflects identity, history, and social relationships within a community. In recent years, gastronomy has become a central component of tourism development, as destinations increasingly use local cuisine to create meaningful and authentic visitor experiences. Studies indicate that gastronomic tourism enhances cultural preservation, strengthens destination competitiveness, and promotes cross-cultural exchange (Espejel & Fandos-Herrera, 2022; Hadian et al., 2024; Jonson & Masa, 2023).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, n.d.) further emphasizes that food tourism supports local economies, fosters cultural identity, and contributes to sustainable development. The growing interest in culinary experiences is driven by tourists' desire for authenticity, novelty, and emotional engagement. Research shows that memorable gastronomic experiences are shaped by sensory appeal, social interaction, cultural learning, and emotional meaning, which influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights, 2024; Ni Made Purnami & Setyawan, 2024). Furthermore, perceived authenticity and emotional connection significantly enhance tourists' enjoyment and overall well-being (International Journal of Gastronomy & Food Science, 2025).

Despite these opportunities, globalization poses challenges to local cuisines. The dominance of international food trends may lead to the marginalization of indigenous culinary traditions and the loss of cultural diversity (Richards, 2021). Studies also highlight that sustainable gastronomic tourism requires strong community participation, preservation of traditional food practices, and effective destination marketing strategies (Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2025).

In the Philippine context, food is increasingly recognized as a vital element of tourism and cultural identity. National initiatives such as the Philippine Experience Program and the Five-Year Roadmap on Gastronomy Tourism (2024–2029) aim to position Filipino cuisine as a global tourism asset (Manila Standard, 2024; Esquire Philippines, 2025). Supporting this, studies show that culinary tourism contributes to economic growth and cultural preservation, with traditional dishes, food festivals, and local establishments serving as key drivers of tourist engagement (Gutierrez et al., 2022; Mendoza, 2023; Moresca et al., 2024). Additionally, food quality, authenticity, and accessibility significantly influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions (Ruzol et al., 2024; Lastimoso et al., 2024). However, many local cuisines in smaller municipalities remain underdocumented and underutilized in tourism planning (Jimenez Tipon & Rosas, 2020). This gap is evident in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, where culinary traditions shaped by coastal resources, coconut-based ingredients, and Bicolano cooking practices remain largely unrecorded. These traditions are often transmitted informally across generations, making them vulnerable to modernization and cultural shifts.

Given these circumstances, there is a need to systematically document and analyze Calabanga's culinary heritage. Developing a gastronomic framework can help preserve traditional food practices, strengthen local identity, and support sustainable tourism development. Such a framework can also provide valuable insights for local government units, tourism planners, and entrepreneurs in promoting authentic culinary experiences. Thus, this study aims to develop a gastronomic framework that highlights Calabanga's local cuisines as reflections of culture, identity, and community pride. Specifically, it seeks to identify culturally rooted cuisines in terms of unique dishes, ingredients, and food traditions; determine the gastronomic identity of local cuisines based on unique flavors, culinary experiences, cultural significance, and preservation of traditions; examine the motivational factors of local tourists in engaging with Calabanga's cuisine; and develop a gastronomic framework that aligns tourist behavior with the town's culinary assets.

## 2. Methods

**Research Design** - This study used a sequential mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the gastronomic framework of local cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. The qualitative phase involved focus group discussions, interviews, and cultural mapping to identify local dishes, ingredients, and culinary practices. The quantitative phase used a survey questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to determine the motivational factors influencing tourists' engagement with local cuisine. The findings from both phases were integrated to develop a comprehensive gastronomic framework that reflects both the community's culinary heritage and tourist behavior.

**Participants of the Study** - The participants of this study consisted of both community knowledge holders and local tourists in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. For the qualitative phase, participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement and knowledge of local culinary practices. These included elders, tourism and cultural officers, vendors, barangay officials, and eatery owners who provided insights into traditional dishes, ingredients, and food-related practices. For the quantitative phase, the respondents were 191 local tourists who had experienced Calabanga's local cuisine. These participants were selected to determine the motivational factors influencing their engagement with local food. The inclusion of both community members and tourists enabled the study to capture a comprehensive perspective of Calabanga's gastronomic identity, combining cultural knowledge with visitor experiences.

**Data Gathering Instrument** - This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data gathering instruments to collect relevant information. For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide was used during focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews. The guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses on local dishes, ingredients, cooking methods, and food-related cultural practices. Cultural mapping tools were also employed to document and identify significant culinary resources within the community. For the quantitative phase, a structured survey questionnaire was administered to local tourists. The instrument consisted of closed-ended statements measured using a five-point Likert scale, which assessed various motivational factors such as cultural and nostalgic motivation, curiosity and experience motivation, food involvement, food-related activities, and sensory motivation. These instruments were designed to ensure the systematic collection of both in-depth qualitative insights and measurable quantitative data necessary for developing the gastronomic framework.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - The data gathering process was conducted in two phases: qualitative and quantitative. In the qualitative phase, permission was first secured from local authorities and participants. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews were then conducted with selected community knowledge holders using a semi-structured guide. The sessions were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken to ensure accurate documentation. Cultural mapping was also carried out to identify and document local dishes, ingredients, and food practices within the community. In the quantitative phase, a structured survey questionnaire was distributed to local tourists who had experienced Calabanga's local cuisine. Respondents were selected in areas such as food establishments and local attractions to ensure relevant participation. The purpose of the study was explained, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. After data collection, all responses were organized, recorded, and prepared for analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data were then integrated to support the development of the gastronomic framework.

**Ethical Considerations** - This study followed ethical standards to protect participants' rights and welfare. Informed consent was obtained, and participation was voluntary, with respondents allowed to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and no personal information was disclosed. The study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), with all data securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. Cultural sensitivity was observed in handling local knowledge, and the researcher ensured that all data were reported honestly without bias or manipulation.

**Data Analysis** - Data analysis was conducted in three stages: qualitative, quantitative, and integration. For the

qualitative phase, data from focus group discussions, interviews, and cultural mapping were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and cultural meanings related to local cuisines and practices. For the quantitative phase, survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly weighted mean and ranking, to determine the level of agreement of respondents and identify the most influential motivational factors affecting tourists' engagement with local cuisine. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated to develop a comprehensive gastronomic framework that reflects both the community's culinary heritage and tourist behavior.

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
*Culturally Rooted Cuisines*

Research Variable	Theme	Sub-theme	Food Outcomes	Sample Statements
Unique Flavors	Seafood as Local Identity	Seafood Specialties	Kasag, pasayan, abo, dilis, tiniktik, local fish dishes	"Seafood mga kasag, pasayan, abo, dilis." [Seafood like crabs, shrimp, clams, and anchovies are cooked.]
		Coastal Cuisine	Local fish and seafood dishes	"Ang Calabanga baga kaya nasa kadakul kitang barangay na sana coastal syempre seafood." [Many barangays are coastal, so seafood is central to our food culture.]
	Traditional Bicolano Flavors	Signature Spicy Dishes	Bicol Express	"Bicol express ang nabistado." [Bicol Express is well-known here.]
		Fermented Food Flavors	Dinailan, dishes with balaw	"Itong dinailan... ang Bicol express is balaw na pino." [Dinailan and Bicol Express use fermented shrimp paste.]
Culinary Experiences	Everyday Home Food Culture	Daily Local Meals	Gulay na natong o santol, fish dishes, native chicken	"Mga lokal.. kun sa harong syempre mga gulay, sira, karneng manok native ta iyo.. ta iyo ang yaon." [Local families usually cook vegetables, fish, and native chicken at home.]
			Fish and Vegetables	Gulay, sira
	Cultural Mapping & Visual Identification	Signature Local Dishes	Bicol Express, adobo, gulay na natong o santol	"Adobo, gulay na natong, Bicol express."
		Common Household Dishes	Log-log, simple local meals	"Mga ordinaryong kakanin... log-log."
	Special Occasion Dishes	Festive Meals	Kaldereta	"Pag may okasyon, perming may kalderita." [During special occasions, kaldereta is always prepared.]
	Cultural Significance	Influence of Local Resources	Seafood-Based Diet	Fish and local seafood
Local Ingredients			Native vegetables and seafood	"Native... sa araldaw ming kinakakan dai man nawawara ang gulay syaka sira."
Vegetable-Based Traditions		Indigenous Vegetable Dishes	Gulay na natong o santol, fried vegetables	"Gulay na natong at sira na prito."
Local Delicacies & Kakanin		Native Delicacies	Suman	"Natatangi suman, suman talaga baga ang pinaka ano sa handaan."
Preservation of Traditions	Family Recipes and Intergenerational Cooking	Family Recipes	Kalamay na mais, tinoktok	"Natatangi itong tiglutulong ito ni papa ning kalamay na mais asin an saiyang tinoktok."

Research Variable	Theme	Sub-theme	Food Outcomes	Sample Statements
	Community Culinary Continuity	Everyday Cultural Food Practices	Traditional seafood, vegetable, and coconut-based dishes	Statements from respondents reflect that these dishes are continuously cooked in households and shared during gatherings.

*Culturally-Rooted Cuisines in Terms of Unique Local Dishes, Ingredients, and Food Traditions* - Table 1 presents the culturally rooted cuisines of Calabanga, Camarines Sur, highlighting the unique local dishes, ingredients, culinary practices, and traditions that define the municipality’s gastronomic identity. The data were gathered from community knowledge holders, reflecting everyday food practices and long-standing culinary traditions embedded in the local culture. The table is organized according to four key research variables: Unique Flavors, Culinary Experiences, Cultural Significance, and Preservation of Traditions. Under these categories, several themes and sub-themes emerged, including seafood as a local identity, coconut-based cuisine, traditional Bicolano flavors, everyday home food culture, special occasion dishes, environmental influence on food, and intergenerational transmission of culinary knowledge. Commonly identified dishes include seafood such as kasag, pasayan, dilis, and tiniktik; coconut-based dishes like ginataang tilapia and ginataang gulay; vegetable dishes such as gulay na natong; and traditional foods like Bicol Express, kaldereta, suman, and tinoktok.

The findings reveal that Calabanga’s cuisine is strongly influenced by its coastal geography and agricultural resources, with seafood emerging as the dominant component of local food identity. The frequent mention of fish, shellfish, and locally sourced ingredients indicates that food practices are shaped by environmental availability and livelihood patterns. Coconut-based cooking and vegetable dishes further reflect the integration of locally abundant resources into daily meals. Moreover, the results highlight that culinary traditions in Calabanga are primarily sustained through household practices and family transmission, rather than formal documentation. The presence of both everyday meals and special occasion dishes suggests that food plays a central role not only in daily sustenance but also in cultural celebrations and social interactions. Overall, the findings indicate that Calabanga’s gastronomy functions as a community-based system, where environment, culture, and tradition are closely interconnected.

These findings support existing literature which emphasizes that local cuisine reflects a community’s cultural identity, history, and environmental context (Zocchi, 2021; Cheng, 2023; Díaz-Sánchez & Palomba, 2021). The dominance of seafood and locally available ingredients aligns with studies indicating that culinary practices are shaped by geographical and ecological resources (Putra et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the role of family-based knowledge transmission confirms that traditional food practices are preserved through generations as part of intangible cultural heritage (Cheng, 2023; Lin et al., 2021). The importance of everyday meals and communal food experiences also reflects the idea that gastronomy serves as a medium for social interaction and cultural continuity (Díaz-Sánchez & Palomba, 2021; Zocchi, 2021). Finally, the findings reinforce the need for systematic documentation of local cuisines, as highlighted in previous studies, to support cultural preservation and sustainable tourism development (Lopez, 2024; IJRISS, 2025; Nurwitasari, 2024).

*Gastronomic Identity of Calabanga’s Local Cuisines, Including Unique Flavors, Culinary Experiences, Cultural Significance, And the Preservation of Traditions* – Table 2 presents the gastronomic identity of Calabanga’s local cuisines in terms of unique flavors, culinary experiences, cultural significance, and preservation of traditions. It reflects how local cuisine is perceived and recognized by visitors and stakeholders, highlighting the elements that define Calabanga as a distinct gastronomic destination. The table shows that Calabanga’s gastronomic identity is characterized by distinct flavor profiles, immersive culinary experiences, cultural relevance, and sustained traditional practices. Key elements identified include the strong presence of coconut-based and spicy Bicolano dishes, seafood-oriented meals, and locally prepared vegetable dishes. Culinary experiences involve home-based cooking, shared meals, and participation in local food practices, while cultural significance is reflected in the use of indigenous ingredients and traditional preparation methods. Preservation of traditions is evident through continuous practice of family recipes and community food customs.

**Table 2***Gastronomic Identity of Calabanga*

Research Variable	Theme	Sub-theme	Gastronomic Identity	Sample Statements		
Unique Flavors	Inherited / Minanang Lasa	Traditional Flavors	Dishes with balaw, ginataan, adobo	“Hiniram ning balaw iyo ning apod inasinan ning balaw.” [Shrimp paste is used to create distinct local flavors.]		
		Passed-Down Dishes	Adobong baboy, gulay na natong	“Napapansin mi na an mga pamilya digdi madalas magtigluto nin adobong baboy asin mga gulay, lalo na pag may okasyon o salo-salo.”		
Culinary Experiences	Pasalubong & Food Memory	Take-Home Food Identity	Bulinaw, abo sisig, cacao chocolate	“Bulinaw, abo, sisig, cacao chocolate.”		
		Fiesta & Community Identity	Celebration Foods	Pancit, kaldereta, menudo	“Pag may okasyon baga halimbawa fiesta... may pansit, kalderita, menudo.”	
	Shared Eating		Food prepared for visitors and guests	“Pag nagduman kami sa Calabanga lalo na pag pyesta, napapansin mi na dakol talaga an mga handa asin very welcoming sinda sa mga bisita.”		
	Hospitality		Inviting outsiders to eat	“Nag iimbetar na sinda kung isay ang makikisalo sa pyestahan.”		
	Practical & Simple Food Identity	Everyday Simplicity	Simple, affordable food	“Simpleng handa depende sa kakayahan ng pamilya.”		
Availability-Based Cooking		Food based on local supply	“Kung anong yaon ta si makakaya lang.”			
Cultural Significance		Coastal & Resource-Based Identity	Seafood Presence	Seafood dishes (fish, shellfish, seafood meals)	“Bilang bisita sa Calabanga, nadadangog mi na an pinaka-lokal na produkto digdi kadalasan hale sa Barangay Sabang.”	
	Use of Local Ingredients		Local produce and coastal resources	“Napapansin me na kung anong yaon iyo nalang yan.”		
	Recognized Local Dishes	Known Local Foods	Palabok, pansit, goto	“Barangay Sabang kilala sa kanilang palabok.”		
Preservation of Traditions	Inherited / Minanang Lasa	Family Recipes	Recipes taught by elders	Iconic Eating Places	Mamays, Coralicious dishes	“Kilala sa Calabanga ang Mamays, pansit, goto.”
				“Maski simple na luto arog kan fried chicken, an timpla kadalasang pinapasa hale sa mga magurang o lola, kaya may sadiring panlasa an kada pamilya.”		

The findings indicate that Calabanga’s gastronomic identity is deeply rooted in its local environment, cultural heritage, and everyday practices. The prominence of coconut milk, chili-based dishes, and seafood highlights the influence of regional Bicolano cuisine and available natural resources. The emphasis on shared meals and home-based food preparation suggests that culinary identity is not only defined by taste but also by social interaction and cultural experience. Moreover, the preservation of traditional cooking methods and recipes demonstrates a strong sense of cultural continuity, where food serves as a medium for maintaining identity across generations. These results suggest that Calabanga’s gastronomic identity is both authentic and experiential, making it a potential asset for tourism development. These findings align with existing studies which emphasize that gastronomic identity emerges from the interaction of flavors, cultural practices, and community experiences (Lin et al., 2021; Cheng, 2023; Díaz-Sánchez & Palomba, 2021). The role of authenticity and traditional preparation methods supports research indicating that preserving culinary heritage strengthens destination identity and cultural meaning (Almansouri et al., 2022; Li et al., 2024; Bahri et al., 2024).

Additionally, the importance of shared food experiences and cultural engagement reflects studies highlighting that culinary tourism is shaped by sensory experiences and social interaction (Park, 2023; Dixit, 2022; García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). The findings further support the idea that strong gastronomic identity contributes

to destination branding and enhances tourist engagement (Putra et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2024).

**Table 3.1**

*Motivation Factors in Terms of Cultural and Nostalgic Motivation*

Parameter	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
I enjoy learning stories behind local dishes because they reveal the town's history and culture.	4.26	1	High
Local dishes reflect the history of Calabanga and showcase its cultural heritage.	4.24	2	High
Eating local dishes helps me understand the traditions and strengthens my sense of belonging.	4.21	3	High
Local food makes me feel connected to Calabanga by linking me to its traditions and stories.	4.18	4	High
I try Calabanga's food to learn about its culture and feel a deeper connection to the place.	4.12	5	High
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>4.20</b>		<b>High</b>

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

*Motivational Factors of the Local Tourists in Engaging with Calabanga's Local Cuisines* - Table 3.1 presents the motivation factors of local tourists in terms of cultural and nostalgic motivation when engaging with Calabanga's local cuisines. This dimension focuses on how food experiences allow tourists to connect with culture, traditions, and personal memories associated with local dishes. It shows that respondents generally agreed that cultural and nostalgic factors influence their engagement with Calabanga's cuisine. Indicators such as experiencing local traditions, connecting with cultural heritage, and recalling familiar or meaningful food experiences obtained relatively high mean scores. These results suggest that tourists value food not only for consumption but also for its cultural and emotional significance. The findings indicate that local cuisine serves as a cultural bridge that allows tourists to experience and appreciate the heritage of Calabanga. The presence of nostalgic motivation suggests that food evokes memories and emotional connections, which enhance the overall tourism experience. This implies that tourists are not solely motivated by taste, but also by the desire to reconnect with traditions and experience a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the results highlight that cultural and nostalgic motivations contribute to deeper engagement with local cuisine, reinforcing the importance of preserving traditional dishes and food practices. This strengthens the role of gastronomy as both a cultural and experiential component of tourism. These findings are supported by previous studies which emphasize that cultural and nostalgic motivations play a significant role in food tourism, as tourists seek authentic experiences that reflect local traditions and heritage (Kim et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2012). Food has been identified as a medium through which individuals reconnect with personal memories and cultural identity, enhancing emotional attachment to a destination (Hernández-Rojas, 2022; Díaz-Sánchez & Palomba, 2021). Additionally, research suggests that cultural experiences in gastronomy contribute to tourist satisfaction and meaningful engagement, as they allow visitors to immerse themselves in the traditions and lifestyle of the community (Tort, 2023; Rousta & Loring, 2020). These insights reinforce the importance of cultural and nostalgic motivation in shaping tourist behavior and supporting the development of gastronomic tourism.

Table 3.2 presents the motivation factors of local tourists in terms of curiosity and experience motivation in engaging with Calabanga's local cuisines. This dimension focuses on tourists' desire to explore new food experiences, try unfamiliar dishes, and gain unique culinary encounters. This indicates that respondents strongly agreed that curiosity and experience motivation influence their engagement with local cuisine, as reflected in the high mean scores of the indicators. Among the different motivational factors, curiosity and experience motivation ranked the highest, showing that tourists are highly driven by the desire to discover new flavors and participate in unique food experiences.

**Table 3.2***Motivation Factors in Terms of Curiosity and Experience Motivation*

Parameter	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
I try Calabanga's food because I am curious about unfamiliar dishes.	4.61	1	Very High
I am motivated to try local dishes that I have never tasted before.	4.58	2	Very High
I enjoy discovering new food experiences when visiting different places.	4.54	3	Very High
Exploring local cuisine satisfies my curiosity about the destination.	4.49	4	High
Trying unique food experiences makes my travel more exciting.	4.47	5	High
Average Mean	4.54		Very High

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

The findings suggest that tourists are primarily motivated by the opportunity to explore unfamiliar foods and gain new experiences, making curiosity a key driver of gastronomic engagement. This indicates that local cuisine serves as an avenue for discovery, where visitors actively seek novel and exciting food experiences that differ from their usual diet. Furthermore, the strong influence of this motivation highlights the importance of offering diverse and authentic culinary options in Calabanga. It implies that tourism initiatives should focus on experiential aspects such as food tasting, culinary tours, and interactive food activities to enhance visitor engagement. Overall, curiosity and experience motivation play a crucial role in shaping tourist behavior and strengthening the appeal of local cuisine as a tourism asset. These findings are supported by previous studies which emphasize that curiosity and novelty-seeking behavior are major drivers of food tourism, as tourists are motivated to try unfamiliar dishes and explore new culinary environments (Crompton, 1979; Kim et al., 2009). Research also indicates that experiential consumption, including tasting and participating in food-related activities, enhances tourists' satisfaction and engagement (Sundqvist, 2023; García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). Studies highlight that the desire for new experiences contributes to memorable gastronomic encounters and influences tourists' intention to revisit and recommend destinations (Ni Made Purnami & Setyawan, 2024; Tort, 2023). These insights reinforce the importance of curiosity and experience motivation in developing effective gastronomic tourism strategies.

**Table 3.3***Motivation Factors in Terms of Food Involvement*

Parameter	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
I consider food an important part of my travel experience.	4.30	1	High
I actively look for local dishes whenever I visit a new place.	4.28	2	High
I am interested in exploring different types of cuisine during my travels.	4.25	3	High
I enjoy learning about the ingredients used in local dishes.	4.22	4	High
I often search for information about local food before visiting a place.	4.18	5	High
Average Mean	4.25		High

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

Table 3.3 presents the motivation factors of local tourists in terms of food involvement in engaging with Calabanga's local cuisines. This dimension focuses on the level of personal interest, importance, and active participation of tourists in food-related activities and experiences. The respondents agreed that food involvement influences their engagement with local cuisine, as indicated by the relatively high mean scores of the indicators. These include interest in trying local dishes, learning about food preparation, and engaging in activities related to

local cuisine. The results suggest that tourists demonstrate a moderate to high level of involvement in food-related experiences.

The findings indicate that food involvement plays a significant role in shaping tourists' engagement with Calabanga's cuisine. Tourists who show a higher level of interest in food are more likely to actively explore local dishes, participate in culinary activities, and seek deeper understanding of food traditions. This suggests that food is not merely consumed but experienced as an important aspect of travel. Furthermore, the results imply that increasing opportunities for interactive food experiences such as cooking demonstrations, food tours, and market visits—can enhance tourist engagement. A higher level of food involvement can lead to greater appreciation of local cuisine, thereby strengthening cultural connection and overall tourist satisfaction.

These findings are supported by previous studies which indicate that food involvement significantly influences tourists' behavior and decision-making in gastronomic tourism (Bell & Marshall, 2003; Kim et al., 2009). Individuals with higher food involvement are more likely to seek authentic food experiences, explore local cuisines, and engage in food-related activities (Mak et al., 2012). Research suggests that active participation in culinary experiences enhances tourists' satisfaction and strengthens their connection to the destination (Sundqvist, 2023; García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). These findings highlight the importance of food involvement as a key factor in promoting meaningful and engaging gastronomic tourism experiences.

**Table 3.4**

*Motivation Factors in Terms of Food-Related Activities and Experiences*

Parameter	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Trying different local dishes is an important part of my travel experience.	4.31	1	High
I am interested in learning how traditional dishes in Calabanga are prepared.	4.29	2	High
I like visiting local eateries and markets to explore Calabanga's cuisine.	4.27	3	High
I enjoy participating in food-related activities when visiting Calabanga.	4.22	4	High
Experiencing local food traditions enhances my overall visit to Calabanga.	4.20	5	High
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>4.26</b>		<b>High</b>

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

Table 3.4 presents the motivation factors of local tourists in terms of food-related activities and experiences in engaging with Calabanga's local cuisines. This dimension focuses on tourists' participation in activities such as food tasting, cooking, market visits, and other culinary-related experiences. The table shows that respondents agreed that food-related activities and experiences influence their engagement with local cuisine, as reflected in the high mean scores of the indicators. These include interest in participating in food-related events, trying local dishes, and engaging in culinary activities that showcase the local food culture. The results indicate that tourists are receptive to interactive and experience-based food activities.

The findings suggest that tourists are motivated not only by the consumption of food but also by active participation in culinary experiences. Engaging in activities such as food tasting, cooking demonstrations, and local market exploration allows tourists to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and traditions of Calabanga. Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of designing experiential tourism activities that allow visitors to interact with local food systems. These experiences enhance tourist satisfaction and create meaningful connections with the destination. This implies that promoting food-related activities can strengthen Calabanga's appeal as a

gastronomic tourism destination and encourage repeat visitation.

These findings are supported by studies which emphasize that participation in food-related activities enhances tourist engagement and creates memorable travel experiences (Ellis et al., 2018; Park, 2023). Experiential tourism, particularly in gastronomy, allows visitors to immerse themselves in local culture through hands-on activities and direct interaction with food traditions (Dixit, 2022; García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). Moreover, research suggests that such experiences contribute to higher levels of satisfaction, emotional connection, and destination loyalty, as tourists value meaningful and participatory activities (Cheng, 2023; Wei et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of food-related activities and experiences in shaping tourist motivation and promoting sustainable gastronomic tourism.

**Table 3.5**

*Motivation Factors in Terms of Gastronomic / Sensory Motivation*

Parameter	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
I enjoy exploring new flavors and ingredients found in Calabanga's cuisine.	4.18	1	High
I try Calabanga's local food because I want to experience its unique taste and flavors.	4.15	2	High
The overall sensory experience (taste, smell, and appearance) motivates me to try Calabanga's food.	4.10	3	High
The aroma and presentation of local dishes make me interested in trying them.	4.08	4	High
I am motivated to try local dishes that look appetizing and visually appealing.	4.04	5	High
Average Mean	4.11		High

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

Table 3.5 presents the motivation factors of local tourists in terms of gastronomic or sensory motivation in engaging with Calabanga's local cuisines. This dimension focuses on how sensory attributes such as taste, aroma, texture, and overall food quality influence tourists' interest in trying local dishes. Respondents agreed that gastronomic or sensory factors significantly influence their engagement with local cuisine, as reflected in the high mean scores of the indicators. These include appreciation of taste, aroma, and overall sensory appeal of the food. The results indicate that tourists are attracted to local cuisine based on its sensory qualities and overall eating experience.

The findings suggest that sensory appeal plays a crucial role in motivating tourists to try and enjoy local cuisine. The emphasis on taste, aroma, and texture indicates that food quality and sensory satisfaction are key drivers of tourist engagement. This implies that tourists are drawn to destinations where food offers a unique and pleasurable sensory experience. Furthermore, the results highlight that enhancing the sensory quality of local dishes can contribute to positive dining experiences and increased tourist satisfaction. Sensory motivation also supports repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth, as memorable food experiences are often associated with strong sensory impressions. Overall, gastronomic or sensory motivation is a fundamental factor in shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences of local cuisine.

These findings are supported by previous studies which emphasize that sensory attributes such as taste, aroma, and texture are primary determinants of food choice and tourist satisfaction (Fields, 2002; Kim & Eves, 2012). Research also indicates that sensory experiences are central to gastronomic tourism, as they create memorable and enjoyable encounters for visitors (García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024; Park, 2023). Additionally, studies highlight that high-quality sensory experiences enhance tourists' overall evaluation of a destination and contribute to

emotional engagement and loyalty (Kovalenko, 2023; Moura et al., 2025). These insights reinforce the importance of gastronomic and sensory motivation in developing competitive and attractive culinary tourism destinations.

**Table 3.6**

*Motivation Factors in Terms of Social Motivation*

Parameter	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
I enjoy trying Calabanga’s local food with family and friends.	4.28	1	High
Trying local cuisine allows me to bond with people during travel.	4.24	2	High
Sharing food experiences with others motivates me to try local dishes.	4.22	3	High
I like recommending Calabanga’s local food to others.	4.20	4	High
Social gatherings encourage me to explore local food.	4.18	5	High
Average Mean	4.22		High

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

Table 3.6 presents the motivation factors of local tourists in terms of social motivation in engaging with Calabanga’s local cuisines. This dimension focuses on how social interaction, shared dining experiences, and relationships with others influence tourists’ participation in local food activities. The table indicates that respondents agreed that social motivation plays a role in their engagement with local cuisine, as reflected in the relatively high mean scores of the indicators. These include sharing meals with family and friends, bonding through food experiences, and interacting with locals during dining activities. The results suggest that social aspects are important in shaping tourists’ food-related behavior.

The findings suggest that food serves as a medium for social connection and interaction, enhancing the overall tourism experience. Tourists are motivated to engage with local cuisine not only for personal enjoyment but also for the opportunity to share experiences with others. This highlights the role of food in fostering relationships, creating shared memories, and strengthening social bonds. Furthermore, the results imply that communal dining and interactive food experiences can enhance tourist satisfaction and engagement. Activities such as group dining, food festivals, and community-based culinary events can further promote social interaction and cultural exchange. Overall, social motivation contributes to a more meaningful and immersive gastronomic experience for tourists.

These findings are supported by studies which emphasize that social interaction is a key component of gastronomic tourism, as food experiences often involve sharing and bonding with others (Kim & Eves, 2012; Mak et al., 2012). Research also highlights that communal dining and social engagement enhance tourists’ satisfaction and emotional connection to a destination (Díaz-Sánchez & Palomba, 2021; Hernández-Rojas, 2022). Additionally, food-related social experiences contribute to cultural exchange and strengthen the sense of belonging among tourists, making them more likely to revisit and recommend the destination (Tort, 2023; Rousta & Loring, 2020). These insights reinforce the importance of social motivation in shaping tourist behavior and promoting gastronomic tourism development.

Table 3.7 presents the overall ranking of motivational factors influencing local tourists’ engagement with Calabanga’s local cuisines. The results show that curiosity and experience motivation ranked first, indicating that tourists are primarily driven by the desire to explore new and unfamiliar food experiences. This is followed by food-related activities and experiences, food involvement, and social motivation, all of which obtained relatively high mean scores, suggesting that tourists value active participation, personal interest in food, and social interaction

when engaging with local cuisine. Meanwhile, cultural and nostalgic motivation and gastronomic or sensory motivation also showed strong influence, although they ranked slightly lower compared to other factors.

**Table 3.7**

*Overall Ranking of Motivational Factors*

Motivational Factor	Overall Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Curiosity & Experience Motivation	4.54	1	Very High
Food-Related Activities & Experiences	4.26	2	High
Food Involvement	4.25	3	High
Social Motivation	4.22	4	High
Cultural & Nostalgic Motivation	4.20	5	High
Gastronomic / Sensory Motivation	4.11	6	High

Legend: 5.00-4.50 Very High; 4.49-3.50 High; 3.49 - 2.50 Moderate; 2.49 -1.51 Low and 1.50 - 1.00 Very Low

These findings suggest that tourist engagement with Calabanga's cuisine is largely shaped by experiential and exploratory factors, where visitors seek novelty and meaningful participation in food-related activities. The high ranking of curiosity and experience motivation highlights the importance of offering diverse and interactive culinary experiences that allow tourists to discover new flavors and engage with local culture. At the same time, the presence of other motivational factors indicates that tourist behavior is multidimensional, influenced by a combination of personal interest, social interaction, cultural connection, and sensory enjoyment. The results emphasize that developing gastronomic tourism in Calabanga should focus on creating immersive, experience-based, and culturally authentic food activities that cater to various tourist motivations. By integrating these factors, the municipality can enhance tourist satisfaction, strengthen its gastronomic identity, and promote sustainable tourism development.

*Gastronomic Framework of Local Cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur*- Figure 1, illustrates the proposed Gastronomic Framework of Local Cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, which presents a systems-based model showing how local culinary resources, cultural practices, and tourism activities are interconnected. The framework highlights the dynamic relationship between food production, preparation, and consumption within the community.



**Figure 1.** *Gastronomic Framework of Local Cuisines in Calabanga, Camarines Sur*

The framework is composed of three core components: production, processing, and consumption. The production component includes local resources such as seafood, agricultural products, and coconut-based ingredients. The processing component involves culinary traditions, including traditional recipes, cooking methods, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The consumption component represents tourism experiences, such as dining, food tasting, and participation in cultural activities. These components are connected in a cyclical flow, emphasizing the continuous interaction between environment, culture, and tourism. The framework suggests that Calabanga's gastronomy operates as an integrated system, where each component supports and reinforces the others. Local resources provide the foundation for food production, which is transformed through cultural practices into meaningful culinary experiences. These experiences are then consumed and appreciated by both locals and tourists, contributing to cultural preservation and economic development. Furthermore, the cyclical nature of the framework indicates sustainability, as continuous interaction among production, processing, and consumption ensures the preservation of culinary traditions while adapting to tourism demands. This highlights the importance of aligning local resources, cultural identity, and tourism strategies to strengthen Calabanga's gastronomic potential.

The proposed framework is supported by existing literature which emphasizes that gastronomy is a system that integrates food resources, cultural identity, and tourism experiences (Cheng, 2023; Zocchi, 2021). Studies also highlight that sustainable gastronomic tourism depends on the interaction between local production, traditional practices, and tourist engagement (Barzallo-Neira & Pulido-Fernández, 2023; Xu et al., 2024). Moreover, research indicates that community participation and preservation of culinary heritage are essential in maintaining authenticity and promoting long-term tourism development (Putra et al., 2023; Nurwitasari, 2024). These perspectives support the framework's emphasis on the interconnected roles of environment, culture, and tourism in shaping a sustainable gastronomic system.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendation**

The findings of the study indicate that Calabanga's local cuisines are strongly influenced by its coastal and agricultural environment, as reflected in its seafood-based dishes, coconut-based cooking, and traditional Bicolano flavors. These elements shape the municipality's gastronomic identity and highlight its cultural heritage. Culinary experiences are rooted in everyday household practices and special occasions, where food preparation and sharing promote social interaction and cultural continuity. The cuisine also reflects the community's close relationship with its environment, while the preservation of traditions is sustained through family-based knowledge transfer and continuous practice. Moreover, tourists are primarily motivated by curiosity and the desire for new experiences, along with participation in food-related activities, social interaction, and cultural connection, emphasizing the importance of experiential and authentic culinary encounters. The developed gastronomic framework further shows that local cuisine can serve as a foundation for sustainable tourism development.

In line with these findings, it is recommended that local government units promote gastronomic tourism through food festivals, culinary trails, and cultural events. Tourism stakeholders should design interactive and experience-based activities such as food tours and cooking demonstrations to enhance visitor engagement. Local communities are encouraged to preserve and transmit traditional culinary knowledge, while entrepreneurs may develop innovative yet authentic food products using local resources. Future researchers may explore related areas such as economic impact, digital promotion, and comparative studies to further strengthen gastronomic tourism development.

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