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Importance of Plastic in Modern Society: Recycling Is the Best Way of Waste Management

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Abstract

Plastic is one of the best and useful inventions of human civilization that possesses both positive and negative expressions. It has extremely advanced the human society in various sectors. It is a polymer based on petroleum products that is used in multipurpose activities, such as household, industry, construction, electrical and electronics, automotive, medical, and packaging. The annual global production of plastics has surpassed 460 million tons in 2025, yet only about 10% of waste plastics are recycled. Over production and consumption of plastic and due to their stable and non-biodegradable nature has led to serious environmental problems, such as contamination of air, soil, sediment, groundwater, and oceans; and also it is related to climate change due to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Therefore, worldwide production, consumption, and disposal of plastic are not sustainable. This paper investigates variants of plastic, and its efficient use and recycling patterns in brief.

Keywords: plastic recycling, plastic waste, non-biodegradable

1. Introduction

Plastic is a cheap durable polymer that consists of synthetic and semi-synthetic compounds mostly derived from petrochemicals (PlasticEurope, 2009). At present it becomes one of the most useful and a versatile material ever invented that is commonly used materials and becomes an integral part of our daily lives, and the modern society would not be possible without it (Soni et al., 2022). It is light with low density, high toughness, durable, ease of design and manufacturing, clean, low cost, and versatile; and use of it has been increasing in packaging, construction and infrastructure, automotive, building, electronic and electrical products, agriculture, and other sectors (Wypych, 2020). It can be molded to any shape as desired, but it is not biodegrade. It plays a significant role in the environmental, societal, and economical dimensions of sustainable development (Mohajan, 2020). It can reduce the energy and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and is needed to transport goods and products (Mohajan, 2015).

During the last 60 years the global production and consumption of plastics has increased tremendously due to population growth, industrialization, consumerism, and technological development (Mohajan, 2021a). It is estimated that about 4% world annual oil production is used to produce and manufacture plastic products (Prasad et al. 2008). The oil refinery processes produce derivatives for producing plastics in ‘fluff’ and then ‘pellets’ forms. Different types of plastics materials, such as packaging materials, window frames, plastics for electrical and electronics apparatus, etc. are prepared from these pellets (Wong, 2010). About 35% of plastics produced in the developed countries are consumed for packaging. Although plastics are currently essential in human life in recent years; the management of plastic waste has become a growing problem (Achilias et al., 2007).

Plastic is reusable and recyclable. Various efficient strategies are involved in the collection, trading, transportation, sorting, storage, and reprocessing of plastic waste during the recycling. It is estimated that

globally only 10% of plastics are recycled and 14% are incinerated; the remaining 76% go to landfills or enter in the natural environment (Horton, 2021).

2. Literature Review

A literature review is a comprehensive summary and critical analysis of existing scholarly works on a specific topic that is a survey of credible sources on a topic, which is used in dissertations, projects, and research papers (Baglione, 2012). It provides an overview of current knowledge on a subject that helps to identify relevant theories and methods as well as gaps in the existing research (Bolderston, 2008).

Akash Balakrishnan and Mary Nancy Flora have discussed about plastic, its properties, various forms of it; its effect on human, nature, and ways of effective management through the recycling (Balakrishnan & Flora, 2017). Bebetto Sabu and his coauthors have shown that plastic is one of the most versatile materials of modern age. They have realized that by recycling plastic, the amount produced and wasted can be reduced but whereas the process has short-term advantages for the environment, and the long-term results are not so pretty (Sabu et al., 2017).

Roberto Nistico has stated that polyethylene terephthalate (PET) is the third most widely diffused polymer exploited in the packaging industry, monopolizing the bottles market for beverages, and covering almost 16% of the European plastic consumption in the packaging industry. He has provided a useful instrument that collects past, present, and future of the PET (Nistico, 2020). Ahmed Trimbakwala has shown that the plastic wastes can be used in road construction and the field tests withstood the stress. He has observed that the durability of the roads laid out with shredded plastic waste is much more compared with roads with asphalt with the ordinary mix. This technology not only strengthened the road construction but also increased the road life as well as will help to improve the environment and also creating a source of income (Trimbakwala, 2017).

Md. Tanvir Hossain and his coworkers have stated that polypropylene (PP) is a versatile polymer with numerous applications that has undergone substantial changes in recent years, and have provided a comprehensive review of recent research in PP and its advanced functional applications. They have emphasized on the promising potential of PP while addressing unresolved concerns, with the goal of guiding future research and promoting innovation in polymer applications (Hossain et al., 2024). Irena Žmak and Carina Hartmann represent the results of the analysis of the current state in waste management of plastic bottles in Germany. They have observed that the plastic recycling rate has risen from 15 to 100% (Žmak & Hartmann, 2017).

3. Research Methodology of the Study

Research is a creative and systematic investigation to discover or refine knowledge about a particular subject (Kara, 2012). It involves the collection, organization, and analysis of evidence to increase understanding of a topic that is characterized by a particular attentiveness to controlling sources of bias and error (Groh, 2018). Methodology is the systematic method to resolve a research problem through data gathering using various techniques, providing an interpretation of data gathered and drawing conclusions about the research data (Murthy & Bhojanna, 2011). It is divided into quantitative and qualitative research, where quantitative research is the main methodology of the natural sciences that uses precise numerical measurements (Berg, 2009). On the other hand, qualitative research is more characteristic of the social sciences that give less prominence to exact numerical measurements. At present many social scientists use mixed method research that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2003). Research methodology is a structured and scientific approach used to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer research questions or test hypotheses that describes the techniques and procedures used to identify and analyze information regarding a specific research topic (Howell, 2012). It is a logical and systematic plan to resolve a research problem, and it is a way of explaining how a researcher intends to carry out the research (Andiappan & Wan, 2020).

4. Objective of the Study

Plastic is low cost, lightweight, durable, clearness, water resistance, weathering, easy to handle, and has relatively high strength and corrosion resistance (Andradi, 2015). Plastic production and consumption was 380 million tons in 2017 compared to only 1.5 million tons in 1950 annually in the world with a projection of 34 billion tons by 2050. Plastic is not biodegradable and is one of the major environmental problems if it does not dispose properly (Tiseo, 2020). Main objective of this article is to discuss the aspects of plastics with the reuses and recycling (Mohajan, 2025e). Other minor objectives of the study are as follows (Mohajan, 2018):

- 1) to highlight on types of plastics,
- 2) to focus on plastic waste, and
- 3) to investigate plastic recycling.

5. Types of Plastics

Plastics are long-chain high molecular weight polymers (Mohajan, 2025d). At present there are more than 30 different types of plastics in regular use (Scott, 1999). Some major plastic resin types are polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polypropylene (PP), polycarbonate (PC), polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polystyrene (PS), nylons, low-density polyethylene (LDPE), and high-density polyethylene (HDPE). These do not easily degrade, and remain in waste streams in environment for 100 to 1,000 years (McCrum et al., 2007).

5.1 Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET)

American chemist Wallace H. Carothers (1896-1937) has discovered the synthetic polyester. The first activities related to polyesters fibers are performed by the American chemist Julian W. Hill (1904-1996). In 1941, the English chemist John R. Whinfield (1901-1966) and his assistant James T. Dickson have synthesized and patented PET (Nistico, 2020). The PET is the largest thermoset plastic consists of repeating $C_{10}H_8O_4$ units that is one of the most widely used and versatile plastic polymers, and shares about 55% of global plastic market. It is excellent wear resistance, low coefficient of friction, high flexural modulus, and superior dimensional stability makes it a versatile material for designing mechanical and electro-mechanical parts (Malik et al., 2017). It is one of the most diffused thermoplastic polymers available on the market. It can be semi-rigid to rigid, depending on its thickness. It is known as the safest and easy to be recycled of all plastics (Ji, 2013). It is a very light, strong, unreinforced, impact-resistant, stiff synthetic fiber, semi-crystalline, and resin with a melting peak temperature between 225°C and 255°C (Locock et al., 2017).

The PET is a member of the polyester family of polymers that is used in fibers for synthetic fibers in clothing, containers and bottles for liquids and foods, thermoforming for manufacturing, packaging foods and some other consumer goods, and in combination with glass fiber for engineering resins (De Vos et al., 2021). Plastic bottles and containers made of PET are used for soft drinks, bottled water, alcoholic drinks, detergents, edible oils, cosmetics, pharmaceutical products, and juice packaging. Its popularity comes from its very light weight, physical clarity, and remarkable strength (Andrady, 2015). Products made of PET are generally large in volume and can take about one thousand years to decompose under natural environmental conditions (Silva et al., 2013).

5.2 Polycarbonate (PC)

The polycarbonate (PC) is a group of thermoplastic polymers that contains carbonate groups $-O-(C=O)-O-$, which is a versatile and tough plastic (Parvin & Williams, 1975). It is one of the important engineering plastics with a wide variety of applications due to the excellent mechanical properties, high impact strength, heat resistance, high modulus of elasticity, excellent balance of toughness, clarity, high thermal resistance, and transparency (Cao et al., 2010).

The PC is discovered in 1898 by the German scientist Alfred Einhorn (1856-1917). It is a durable material with high impact-resistance and low scratch-resistance (Mohajan, 2021a). Therefore, a hard coating is applied to PC eyewear lenses and PC exterior automotive components (Parvin & Williams, 1975). It is used in electronic components, construction materials, 3D printing; production of compact discs, DVDs, and Blu-ray discs; production of automotive, aircraft, security components, medical devices, and smartphone manufacturing (Assadi et al., 2014).

5.3 Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE)

The low-density polyethylene (LDPE) is a thermoplastic made from the monomer ethylene that is the first grade of polyethylene, produced in 1933 by the *English oceanographer* John C. Swallow (1923-1994) and *British scientist* Michael Willcox Perrin (1905-1988), who were working for Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) using a high pressure process through the free radical polymerization (Malpass, 2010). It is a semi-crystalline material with milky white base color and waxy feel. It is excellent impact resistance; semi flexible soft material chemical resistance and electrical insulation are excellent (Ghatge et al., 2020). Although it is flexible and tough, breakable with density range of 917-930 kg/m³. It can be translucent or opaque. It is one of the best and safest types of plastic, suitable for cold and hot liquids. It is highly non-reactive material and withstand up to 100°C (Karl et al., 2018).

The LDPE is used to produce films or bags, containers, dispensing bottles, wash bottles, squeezable bottles, tubing, trash can liners, shrink wrap, food storage containers, bread bags, frozen food bags, wire and cable applications, electrical components, battery cases, automotive parts, housewares, and stretch wrap (Sarker et al., 2020). It is recyclable, but needs to be previously sorted from harder fractions of plastics and treated in adequate recycling processes (Achilias et al., 2007).

5.4 High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE)

The high-density polyethylene (HDPE) is high corrosion resistant plastic, hard, rigid, clear, and solvent welded thermoplastic polymer that is made from petroleum. It accounts for over 34% of the global plastic market. It is a solid material that can tolerate high temperature and strong chemicals (Araújo et al., 2008). It is safe,

long-lasting, weather-resistant, and needs low maintenance. It offers stronger intermolecular forces and tensile strength (Amjadi & Fatemi, 2020). It resists mold, mildew, and rotting; making it the ideal material for underground piping used to deliver water. It can be easily cut, machined, welded, and fabricated. The density of HDPE ranges from 930 to 970 kg/m³ (Loulcheva et al., 1997).

It is primarily used for shampoo bottles, window frames, milk jugs, detergent bottles, margarine tubes, pipe systems, garden furniture, grocery bags, bags and damp-proof membranes, food storage containers, toys, pyrotechnic components, cutting boards, coax cable insulators, chemical containers, dustbins, corrosion-resistant piping, nursery pots, medical equipment, geo-membranes, pesticide containers, ointment tubes, plastic lumber, flower pots, cereal box liners, boating components, and oil containers (Ayadi et al., 2011; Teusdea et al., 2020).

It is used in orthopedic implants, such as knee or hip replacements for their low friction coefficient, high wear resistance, impact strength, chemical and corrosive resistance, and biocompatibility. It is also used in plastic surgery, snowboards, shoe lasts, 3D printing filament, wood plastic composites, etc. It takes 1.75 kg of petroleum to make one kg of HDPE (Yuan et al., 2002). It is easily recyclable that helps to reduce plastic production by up to 50%. Recycled HDPE is used in plastic furniture and automobile parts. Recycling of HDPE is limited due to the presence of some additives, such as chlorine, cadmium, lead, etc. (Thakare et al., 2015).

The HDPE has some disadvantages, such as it is highly flammable, not biodegradable, sensitive to stress cracking, non-compostable, poor weathering resistance, and difficult to bonding, not resistant to oxidizing acids, not resistant to chlorinated hydrocarbons, high thermal expansion, and poor temperature capability (Huang et al., 2013).

5.5 Polypropylene (PP)

The polypropylene (PP) is an important commercial polymer that is extensively applied in many areas, such as home appliances, construction, automobile, and other industrial appliances, owing to its attractive properties, easy processing, and low cost (Liu et al., 2018). It is a high-quality general purpose engineering plastic material. It is strong, flexible, abrasion, impact resistance, dangerous, and unsafe (Jansri & O-Charoen, 2018). It is available in a range of grades and forms to suit many applications. It is economical and lightweight that is widely used in ropes because of its lightweight and hard wearing (Akinci et al., 2008). It is also used in products, such as yarn, fabrics, food packaging, meat trays, nursery pots, row covers, surgery tools, yogurt and margarine containers, bottle caps, ketchup bottles, and food pack aging (Maier & Calafut, 1998). It is highly recyclable, but recycling is limited due to contamination, difficulties in collection, and mixture with other materials (Hossain et al., 2024).

5.6 Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)

Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is one of the first plastics discovered that is derived from salt (57%) and oil or gas (43%). It is the third most widely produced synthetic plastic polymer (about 40 million tons), after polyethylene (PE) and polypropylene (PP); and about half of the world PVC production capacity is in China (Karlen, 2006). The largest single producer of PVC as of 2018 is Shin-Etsu Chemical of Japan, with a global share of around 30%. It is biologically and chemically resistant (Allsopp & Vianello, 2012).

It is a white and brittle solid plastic. It is soluble in ketones, chlorinated solvents, dimethylformamide. It becomes harmful and toxic if used for long-time (Holloway, 1998). It is considered as bad plastic, as it is cost effective to produce and is highly resilient to chemical and biological damages (Rahman, 2007). It is used in making clothing, upholstery, plumbing, flexible hoses or tubes, signage, phonograph records, rubber substitutes, doors and windows, flooring, inflatable products, and electrical cable insulation (Illston & Domone, 2002). It is also used to produce essential products, such as pressure pipes, outdoor furniture, food packaging, plastic bottles, shrink wrap, liquid detergent containers, bank or membership cards, etc. With cotton or linen, it is used in the production of canvas (Grause et al., 2017).

5.7 Polystyrene (PS)

Polystyrene (PS) is a *synthetic* aromatic polymer made from the monomer styrene. It is discovered in 1839 by *German apothecary* Eduard Simon (1789-1856). It is clear, glassy, rigid, brittle, opaque, and melts at 95°C (Wypych, 2020). Expanded PS is foamed, lightweight, energy absorbing, and heat insulating. It is flexible and can be easily made into different forms. It is used to make plastic models, CD and DVD cases, yoghurt pots, egg cartoons, food trays, egg boxes, and disposable utensils, video cassettes, televisions, packaging pellets, and Styrofoam peanuts (Kausar, 2021). It is also widely used in manufacturing plates, poultry trays, plastic foam cups/plates, plastic cutlery, and eyeglasses frames. It affects liver, red blood, kidneys, and stomach. It is not easy to recycle due to low density (Haynes, 2011). It presents some limitations, such as a barrier against O₂ and smog, and presenting a quite low melting point (Singh et al., 2025).

6. Plastic Roads

Plastic roads are paved roadways that are made partially or totally from plastic or plastic composites that are used to replace standard asphalt materials (Peters, 2019). These are first developed by Indian scientist Rajagopalan Vasudevan in 2001 through the use of an asphalt mix incorporating plastic waste (Thiagarajan, 2018). About 3 to 4% plastic is mixed with the bitumen that increases the melting point of the bitumen and makes the road retain its flexibility during winters resulting in its long life (Patel et al., 2018).

When plastic is mixed with hot bitumen, plastics melt to form an oily coat over the aggregate and the mixture is laid on the road surface like a normal tar (Mohajan, 2021b). Recently plastic wastes, such plastic-carry bags, disposable cups, and PET bottles are used in plastic road construction (Poweth et al., 2013). Plastic mix in asphalt can reduce the viscosity of the mix that allows a lower working temperature, and reduces volatile organic compound and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions (Subramanian, 2016).

7. Plastic Waste

The plastic waste is one of the main problems of the society. Also, it is one of the major causes of environmental pollution and destruction, becomes carcinogenic to human, causes birth defects in human, impairs immunity, damages livelihoods, and increases endocrine disruption (Wamba et al., 2023). The plastic pollution crisis is causing the environmental destruction, sickness, mortality, and damage to livelihoods. At present plastic cannot be collected effectively, so the dumping causes huge health and environment problems (Babaremu et al., 2022). Plastic contains dioxins that causes damage to the nervous system, causing tumors, genetic mutations, and some genetic diseases, which cause birth defects, and disruption in fertility, reproduction, and sexual maturation. Negative impacts of plastic are carcinogenic, mutagenic, toxic for reproduction, harmful to aquatic life, etc. (Lang. et al, 2009).

Plastic waste is filling our oceans at an exponential rate that has become a global catastrophe (Mohajan, 2025c). Plastic debris is a threat to marine wildlife. About 5 trillion pieces of plastic weighing about 322 million tons are currently littering in oceans and the pollution is increasing rapidly (Eriksen, 2014).

8. Plastic Recycling

Plastic recycling is the system for recovering waste plastic and reprocessing them into useful and valuable products. It has grown significantly during the last few years. Plastic can be recycled into new plastic bottles, plastic boxes, t-shirts, fleeces, and stuffing for pillows (Loulcheva et al., 1997). The recycling chain of plastic consists of several traders, waste sorters, grinders, and pellet makers. The waste plastics are heated up to 2,700-3,000°C to convert into liquid-vapor state, and it is collected in condensation chamber in the form of liquid fuel (Wong, 2010). At present global plastic recycling processes are logistically inefficient, expansive, fragile, and even environmentally harmful. The PET and HDPE are safe and recyclable. Only 10% of the world's plastic is currently recycled (Tulashie et al., 2022).

9. Importance of Plastic Recycling

Plastic recycling is one of the easiest ways to be environmentally friendly that reduces rubbish going to landfill, pollution, and raw material extraction that saves energy and combats climate change (Collings, 2007). It is saving a lot of energy and natural resources, such as petroleum, water, and other natural resources and conserves the balances in nature (Mohajan, 2025a). It opens up job opportunities, and involves a reduced cost in materials for new goods (Velis et al., 2022). For recycling plastic requires less energy and fossil fuels that results in reducing GHG emissions, and brings benefits to the environment. Waste plastics have economic value. Plastic recycling conserves energy, reduces CO₂ emissions, saves landfill space, and saves marine life (Moniruzzaman et al., 2012).

More than 400 species of oceans, such as seabirds, sea turtles, fishes, and marine mammals have been injured or killed after ingesting plastic materials. Recycling is the most economic method of managing plastic wastes (Barnes et al., 2009). Because it reduces the exploitation of non-renewable petroleum-plastic raw materials, limits the quantity of plastics sent to landfills, and provides cheaper route to plastic production (Mohajan, 2025b). China is the largest importer of recycling plastics from Japan, USA, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, and many other countries (Hopewell et al., 2009).

10. Conclusions

We are living in the plastic age. At present plastic is a very important issue in the modern society, and global consumption of it is increasing at an average rate of 10% per year. The plastic is widely used in making electrical instruments, medical instruments, telephones, automobile parts, lamps, goggles, optical instruments, household appliances, etc. It is estimated that in every minute, more than one million plastic bags are thrown away after an average use of just 15 minutes, and consequently plastic pollution is increasing at an alarming rate. It is considered one of the major crises that is threatening the sustainable development. Plastic recycling is the best strategy for the end-of-life management of plastic products that increases economic sense, and reduces negative

environmental impacts. It guarantees that existing resources will be used sensibly and sustainably. On the other hand, global demand for recycled plastics is also increasing. Recycled plastics can be used for high end application, with low cost and reasonable price that provides an approach for the sustainable management of plastic wastes.

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A Review of Literature on the Work-Life Balance of Female University Faculty from the Perspective of Patriarchal

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Abstract

This paper reviews the challenges faced by female university faculty in balancing professional advancement and maternal responsibilities, framed within the theoretical context of patriarchy. Drawing on feminist, the study traces how patriarchal norms have historically defined women's roles in both private and public spheres, particularly in the Chinese context. Although China promoted formal gender equality after 1949, the persistence of traditional family structures and implicit gendered expectations continues to constrain women's career mobility. The analysis highlights the dual burden faced by female academics: while they benefit from relatively stable institutional environments, they remain subject to performance evaluations that overlook the disproportionate domestic labor they perform. Furthermore, the structural barriers in academic promotion, research productivity, and leadership appointments also highlight the disadvantaged position of female teachers. The paper argues that addressing these disparities requires not only legal protections and flexible policies but also gender-sensitive reforms in academic evaluation systems, expanded institutional support, and greater political recognition of women's contributions. Ultimately, the professional development of female academics is not just a matter of individual equity but one of broader social and political significance.

Keywords: patriarchy, feminism, motherhood, female university faculty, gender inequality

1. Introduction

In public discourse, the term “university faculty” is frequently constructed through a gendered lens, often defaulting to portrayals of male academics. Media and scholarly texts tend to depict this group through dimensions such as age, compensation, and academic achievement. On one hand, early-career faculty may be labeled as “academic worker bees,” emphasizing their labor-intensive roles. On the other hand, senior scholars are more likely to be characterized as “experts” or “authorities,” underscoring their academic influence. Ritzer (2004) has noted that in sociological analysis, the term “gender” is frequently used as a euphemism for “women,” reflecting a persistent androcentric bias. When the identity of university faculty intersects with gender, female academics are often portrayed in idealized terms, elegant in demeanor, intellectually accomplished, and embodying both beauty and talent. Yet, there is a notable lack of inquiry into how their gender may expose them to the structural injustices of patriarchy. This paper will use patriarchy as a theoretical framework to explore the issue of balance in women's career development, especially with higher education, and to develop a summary of existing research on the realities they may face in the face of invisible patriarchal rules.

2. The Role of Women in the Private Sphere of the Family

British legal historian Henry Maine introduced the concept of patriarchy from the perspective of kinship systems in his seminal work *Ancient Law*. Drawing on ancient texts such as *The Homeric Epics* and *The Old Testament*, Maine (1906) inferred the existence of the concept of the “despotic father” in early legal thought. This notion

reflected the structure of ancient familial life, in which all family members, under either biological or fictive kinship established by legal fiction, were subject to the rule or governance of a single patriarch. This patriarch, typically a senior male relative such as the father, grandfather, or great-grandfather, exercised absolute authority. Within this structure, children and other family members, regardless of gender, were considered extensions of the patriarch rather than autonomous individuals and were deprived of personal and property rights, effectively rendering them akin to slaves within the family unit.

Weber (1978) identified three historical types of legitimate domination, namely traditional authority, charismatic authority, and legal-rational authority. For Weber, the essence of patriarchy lies in the power relation between the ruler and the ruled, between the master and the servant, the patriarch and the child (Zhu, 1995). At its core, patriarchy is rooted in obedience. Weber astutely observed that “tradition” continually sacralizes the patriarch’s status, reinforcing both the arbitrariness and the limitations of patriarchal rule through the formal delineation of patriarchal boundaries (Fujii, 2005).

While Maine and Weber analyzed the inequalities under paternal authority largely from legal and structural perspectives, later theorists such as Anthony Giddens and Friedrich Engels offered more socially embedded critiques of patriarchy grounded in biological and property-based differences (Cui, 2009). Giddens (2009) argued that physiological differences between men and women assigned to women the biological and social function of motherhood, thereby subordinating them within the social order. Engels (2001) linked the subordinate position of women within monogamous marriage and the nuclear family to the unequal development of private property and class structures. Patriarchy, which exists as a limitation of the capitalist system, will disappear with the stage of socialism (Liu & Wang, 2003).

Huang (2021) argues that the question of how to conceptualize motherhood has long been a central dilemma in feminist theory. The notion of patriarchy, initially used to explain men’s direct exploitation of women within the private sphere of the family, later extended to the public domain, where male dominance in discourse relegated women to marginal or non-existent social status (Dai, 2001). Within this context, women have often been portrayed in the role of “motherhood,” with their unpaid labor for the family receiving a degree of symbolic recognition. However, with the changing pattern of social division of labor, more and more women are moving into different social positions. And in the new model of family development, it has become an issue that the patriarchal tradition and the feminist movement have had to argue fiercely about whether to silently inherit the tradition of letting motherhood turn women into slaves or to abolish motherhood (i.e., to abolish this obligatory role of women that is the foundation of patriarchy and to stop the unpaid labor and the emotional patterns that are fixed in place).

3. Patriarchy and Feminism in the Public-Private Interface

The concepts of “matriarchy” and “patriarchy” both originate from analyses of power relations rooted in modes of production and ownership of the means of production. Fox (1988) argued that any theory of patriarchy must simultaneously account for both the superstructure and individual subjectivity. However, efforts to theorize patriarchy have faced persistent disagreement over the historical roots of women’s oppression (Beechey, 1979). Feminists have endeavored to theorize the functioning of patriarchy in specific contexts, defining different manifestations (Kandiyoti, 1988) and explaining its changing interactions with capitalism (Walby, 1990).

With the emergence of the concept of patriarchy, traditional concerns with intergenerational relations in classical studies gave way to analyses centered on “gender conflict” and “gendered exploitation” as frameworks to explain women’s subordination across historical periods. A key figure in radical feminist thought, Shulamith Firestone, advanced what she termed *The Dialectic of Sex*, arguing that the sexual class system originates directly from women’s biological reality of childbearing (Firestone, 1970). In her view, the familial structure embeds patriarchy into the reproductive relations of humankind. Similarly, Lerner (1986) pointed out that in early human societies, functional divisions of labor between men and women created asymmetrical dependencies, whereby women became reliant on men for survival.

During this period, women actively sought to demonstrate their social value, asserting that they, like men, are integral members of society and rejecting the notion that social respect and recognition are privileges reserved exclusively for men (Lu, 2021). Influenced by the ideals of liberty and equality emerging from the French Revolution, women began to awaken to their political consciousness and to fight for rights within a male-dominated society. Wollstonecraft (1891) argued that both women and men should be regarded as rational beings, and that society should be restructured based on reason. This vision inspired countless women to break free from domestic confines and pursue public engagement. Women of this era expressed their aspirations for freedom and independence by imitating male social behaviors and engaging in political activism, most notably through the campaign for suffrage. These acts symbolized a collective rejection of gendered limitations and an effort to assert their rightful place in civic life.

With the advancement of the first and second waves of the women's movement, women increasingly stepped out of the domestic sphere and entered broader social and public life. By the 1930s, propelled by a new surge in feminist activism, women's social status had markedly improved. All women's liberation movements during this period were framed as efforts to dismantle the patriarchal system and to establish a new social order (Elliot, 1992). As victories were achieved in securing suffrage, access to education, and the right to employment, feminist agendas expanded to include demands for equal pay, economic independence, the right to retain property and wages after marriage, and legal recognition of child support obligations. Some scholars have further argued that women across all social classes experience forms of male oppression (Acker, 1989). Therefore, the feminist revolution within the patriarchal structure was not simply aimed at abolishing male power, but rather at eradicating the very notion of structural gender difference.

As more and more women enter society and work successfully, driven by this wave of historical development, new problems have come to light, i.e., the increasingly acute conflict between family, marriage, and work. Education became a pivotal factor influencing this complex issue. In fact, whether women had access to education became a class issue (Nie, 2003), resulting in a divergence: middle-class women, often equipped with higher education, were able to pursue professional employment, while women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds remained trapped in precarious labor conditions as a means of survival.

4. Patriarchy and Women's Liberation in China

Unlike Western societies, the structure of Chinese society is deeply embedded in an ethical order. As Fei et al. (1992) famously theorized through his concept of the "differential mode of association", social relationships in China are organized along concentric moral hierarchies rather than abstract legal equality. Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) categorized patriarchal systems into two broad models: the African pattern found in sub-Saharan societies, and what she termed classic patriarchy, common in South Asia, East Asia, and the Muslim Middle East. According to her typology, China falls under the latter. That is to say, in an environment that conforms to the productive needs of an agrarian society, where the patriarchal structure is at the center of family development, where the male elder controls the others (people and things), and where women can establish their individual status in the family only by giving birth to a male, and have no power over family property, dowry or bride price.

Early Confucian thought in China regarded family life as embedded within a hierarchical social order. The concept of "the family and the state as one" positioned the family as a microcosm of the ideal relationship between the individual and the state, with domestic norms serving as moral extensions of political governance into the private sphere (Sangwha, 1999). Within this framework, Chinese women are during a traditional ethical requirement that makes them subservient without a subjective identity, and the gender division of labor in society, where men are in charge of the public sphere and women are in charge of the domestic realm, reinforces the difference between the male and female roles (Li, 2018). This division contributed to the institutionalization of gendered power asymmetries, whereby social expectations in traditional Chinese society mandated that men be strong and dominant, while women remain weak, inferior, and submissive. This normative structure was further solidified by the Confucian doctrine of the "Five Cardinal Relationships", which codified interpersonal roles into a moral system (Ma, 2008). As a result, gender relations were not only naturalized but also moralized, sustaining both cultural and familial ethics that underpinned the broader sociopolitical order in China, one that appeared disorderly on the surface but was in fact deeply structured and regulated through these traditional norms.

In the process of China's economic development, state power actively promoted the image of the "Iron Girl", a symbol of the laboring woman, as a class equal to men. Women came to be regarded as an essential component of the national labor force in the construction of socialist China. The promulgation of the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China in 1950 marked the first time gender equality was codified into law, affirming the equal rights of women and men. Unlike the implicit moral constraints embedded in traditional Chinese ethics, this new legal framework sought to redefine women's social identity. As Harriet Evans (2008) has observed, women were no longer judged solely by their roles in terms of the body, gender, and family interests. Instead, they were conceptualized alongside men as both subjects of class construction and agents of political development. But even more insidious is the fact that even though women are given equal rights under the law and are equally responsible for building the nation's development by participating in the affairs of society, the social responsibilities and duties of these iron girls are not limited to this. Despite their public roles, many still adhered to patriarchal familial norms at home, following state-sanctioned ideals that reinforced traditional gender roles within the private sphere (Leung, 2003).

Since the launch of the Reform and Opening-Up policy in 1978, China has pursued a path of economic modernization. Under the impact of market-oriented reforms, the previously state-enforced gender equality began to erode, and patriarchal structures, once challenged by socialist ideology, re-emerged. Women were again

positioned as contributors, expected to sacrifice for the collective good. But this sacrifice and contribution remain unchanged to this day, within the patriarchal structure and demanded by the traditional obligation of the need to maintain family harmony (Leung, 2003). More troublingly, women themselves reinforce the inevitability of this “vulnerable” role, repeating the need to maintain harmony, persuading women against women, and reinforcing patriarchy to move to the center again.

Gender-discriminatory labor divisions continue to impose a dual burden on women: they are expected to participate in the workforce and contribute economically, while simultaneously fulfilling caregiving and domestic responsibilities. Although the Chinese government has consistently emphasized gender equality in official discourse and has introduced legal protections against discrimination, structural inequities persist. With the relaxation of childbirth policies, women face increasing demands on their time and energy. Responsibilities related to childbirth and caregiving often lead to career interruptions, family conflicts, and reduced job mobility. While these are seen as expected contributions, they in fact hinder women’s professional development (Li, 2016).

There is a negative correlation between taking on motherhood and women’s career development. Women’s employment increases women’s life chances and their sense of self-control, but the critical period of women’s career development often overlaps with the time of childbearing and child-rearing, which can lead to the phenomenon of childlessness in society. The study found that although located in the same East Asian region, compared with the M-shaped employment pattern of women in Japan and Korea, the employment pattern of women in China is inverted U-shaped (Li, 2017). When women re-enter the labor market after assuming the burdensome tasks of motherhood. When women re-enter the labor market after taking on the heavy tasks of motherhood, the precariousness of the job, the low income, the family conflict caused by the income gap and the potential gender discrimination of the employer are once again reinforced, and women will suffer the wage penalty at this time. The temporal overlap and mutual exclusivity between motherhood and professional development can place women in precarious situations, where a single misstep may result in a cascade of disadvantages and even existential hardship. Whether women choose the so-called “career ceiling” during their peak professional years or are forced to prematurely retreat from the workforce during periods of decline (Yang, 2013), the challenge of balancing motherhood and career remains a persistent dilemma.

5. Academic Careers: Occupational Mobility of Women and Working Mothers

Compared to women in general, the career paths of female teachers in higher education are relatively relaxed, and the corresponding institutional shelters can protect teachers who take on motherhood duties (Wu et al., 2015). Nonetheless, they are still largely constrained by the inverted U-shaped career development pattern. Because of the high entry barrier for university teachers and the high level of education of this group of practitioners, there is a small difference between women and men in terms of specialized knowledge and skill acquisition. Also, because college teachers are mainly engaged in mental activities, their stable work, free time, and high social status are prominent career characteristics that make this career choice favored by highly educated women. However, unlike other professions where work hours tend to correlate directly with output, the professional performance of female academics remains subject to the constraints of their natural obligations. As a result, despite the ostensibly egalitarian nature of academia, performance-based evaluations that emphasize individual output often reproduce the same promotional barriers observed in other sectors (Ye, 2021).

Both domestic and international studies have consistently shown that female university faculty members face significant disparities in opportunities for upward career mobility compared to their male counterparts. These disparities are particularly evident in areas such as promotion to full professorships, qualification as doctoral supervisors, and appointments to university leadership positions. Due to the burden of “invisible” gendered responsibilities, namely, most notably caregiving, female academics remain trapped under the career development dilemmas like women in other professional fields. The higher the academic or administrative rank, the lower the proportion of women (Liu et al., 2012; Alshdiefat et al., 2024). Beyond the unequal ceiling of promotion and access to career development opportunities, gender-based divisions of labor also affect the time female faculty can devote to research. Compared to their male colleagues, female academics often have less personal time for scholarly work due to their domestic obligations (Zhu & Lu, 2014). This leads to a persistent disparity in research productivity, with women generally producing fewer academic outputs than men (Cole & Zuckerman, 1984).

The root causes of gender disparities in academic career development are multifaceted. An increase in the number of children a woman bears significantly reduces her labor supply (Zhang, 2011). Meanwhile, based on the traditional patriarchal demands on women’s family responsibilities and division of labor in the family, there is a clear difference between men’s and women’s investment of time and energy in work (Nguyen, 2013; Wolfinger et al., 2008). Within institutional evaluation systems, gender bias is often embedded and difficult to avoid (Macfarlane & Burg, 2019). Consequently, flawed organizational assessment mechanisms can serve as

major barriers to the professional advancement of female university faculty (Brooks et al., 2014). The unequal allocation of individual resources between work and family inevitably leads to a competition for resources between the two domains, giving rise to bidirectional work-family conflict. This conflict manifests in two ways: in work-to-family conflict, women report that the demands of their jobs interfere with the fulfillment of family roles by creating psychological, temporal, and behavioral disruptions; in family-to-work conflict, women often find that the time and energy devoted to family responsibilities impede their ability to perform in professional roles (Frone et al., 1992).

As a deeply embedded social structure, patriarchy exerts comprehensive and pervasive influence on women's lives. Recent research increasingly suggests that legal protections, economic support, and political enforcement measures can all shape whether women are more likely to conform to or challenge prevailing gender norms (Tankard & Paluck, 2017). Fox (2005) found that remarried female scientists outperformed their first-marriage counterparts in terms of research productivity. The study attributed this outcome to the tendency of remarried female scientists to choose spouses who are also scientists, thereby receiving more intellectual and emotional support for their academic careers. Such findings appear to echo MacKinnon's viewpoint that all of women's social accomplishments are mediated through their relationships with men (MacKinnon, 2007). If women are to balance the labor costs required for professional development while simultaneously fulfilling the heavy responsibilities of motherhood, greater support from the broader social environment and institutional structures is essential (Tong, 2001). Even in the United States, female faculty continue to face challenges similar to those experienced in China, particularly in the gendered division of domestic labor (Docka-Filipek & Stone, 2021). Given the specificity of the requirements for career advancement in higher education, even if organizations adopt flexible work hour systems for women to guarantee fair opportunities (Padavic, 2020) or extend the assessment cycle for evaluating tenure (Antecol et al., 2018), these measures or policies to guarantee fairness, because they apply to all groups of faculty, may instead be more favorable for male faculty to highlight their competitive advantages.

6. Conclusion

After centuries of patriarchal constraint, even elite women such as university faculty members still require robust policy and institutional safeguards to realize genuine gender equality. The well-known slogan "Women hold up half the sky" is not merely rhetorical; in practical terms, the restricted development of women represents not only a personal loss but also a broader societal setback. For female university faculty, behind the image of highly educated women given by social symbols, there is still a need for a more relaxed and equal research environment, and more opportunities for career advancement in favor of women's quotas. The elimination of invisible gender discrimination in the workplace and the protection of the voice of women who participate in the intellectual and physical labor of society are not only of social significance but also of far-reaching political significance.

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The Impact of Cross-Cultural Translation on the International Competitiveness of the U.S. Cultural Industry

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Abstract

The U.S. cultural industry, encompassing movies, music, literature, and games, holds a significant position in the global market. However, cultural differences and language barriers impede its international competitiveness. This paper constructs a theoretical framework integrating cross-cultural psychology and translation studies theories, proposing translation strategies for the U.S. cultural industry. Empirical research on several U.S. cultural industry projects, utilizing questionnaires, market analysis, and consumer feedback, verifies the effectiveness of these strategies. The study finds that cultural adaptability strategies, language style adjustments, and audience-oriented translation methods significantly enhance the international market acceptance and competitiveness of U.S. cultural products. The paper also provides policy recommendations based on the research findings, contributing to cross-cultural translation theory and offering practical solutions for the international development of the U.S. cultural industry.

Keywords: cross-cultural translation, U.S. cultural industry, international competitiveness, cultural adaptability, translation strategies, empirical research, cultural industry internationalization, cultural differences, language barriers, policy recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The U.S. cultural industry, which includes movies, music, publishing, and games, has a profound economic influence and cultural dissemination power. However, cultural differences and language barriers limit its international competitiveness. In the context of globalization, cross-cultural translation is crucial for enhancing the international communication effect of the U.S. cultural industry.

1.2 Research Questions and Significance

This study investigates the impact of cross-cultural translation on the international competitiveness of the U.S. cultural industry, exploring how translation strategies can overcome cultural and linguistic barriers to enhance international market acceptance. The study aims to construct a cross-cultural translation strategy framework applicable to the U.S. cultural industry and verify its effectiveness through empirical research. The theoretical significance lies in enriching cross-cultural translation theory, while the practical significance is to provide specific guidance for the internationalization of the U.S. cultural industry, promoting its global dissemination and development.

1.3 Research Methods

This study employs a combination of literature review, case analysis, and empirical research. The literature review examines the relevant theoretical foundations; typical cases are selected to analyze the application effects of translation strategies; and data are collected through questionnaires, market analysis, and consumer feedback

to verify the effectiveness of the strategies and propose policy recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cross-Cultural Translation Theory

Cross-cultural psychology provides theoretical support for cross-cultural translation, helping to understand cognitive and behavioral patterns in different cultural contexts. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory can identify cultural differences between source and target languages. Research on cultural adaptability and cognitive differences shows that audiences from different cultural backgrounds have differences in information processing, and translators need to consider the cognitive habits of the target culture to ensure effective information transmission. Translation studies theory provides methodological support for cross-cultural translation. The functional equivalence theory emphasizes that the translation should achieve the same functional effect as the original text, focusing on the actual effect of the translation in the target culture. Cultural translation theory emphasizes the importance of cultural factors, considering translation as a cultural transmission that needs to handle cultural differences while maintaining the integrity and accuracy of cultural connotations.

2.2 U.S. Cultural Industry Research

The U.S. cultural industry began with the rise of Hollywood movies in the early 20th century and expanded to music, television, publishing, and digital media. Hollywood movies established a dominant global position through technological innovation and global market promotion. The development of digital technology has further expanded the U.S. cultural industry into emerging fields such as online video, electronic games, and social media, promoting its global dissemination. The international competitiveness of the U.S. cultural industry is reflected in its strong market share and competitive advantage, but it also faces challenges such as cultural differences and language barriers in the process of internationalization.

2.3 The Impact of Translation on the Cultural Industry

Translation is widely applied in the cultural industry, including movie subtitle translation, literary work translation, and game localization translation. Movie subtitle translation needs to convey dialogue content while considering cultural background; literary work translation needs to maintain the cultural connotations of the original work while adapting to the reading habits of the target culture; game localization translation needs to adjust cultural elements to enhance player acceptance. Translation plays a significant role in the international dissemination of the cultural industry, conveying cultural connotations, enhancing product international market acceptance, strengthening competitiveness, and promoting globalization.

3. Theoretical Framework Construction

3.1 Theoretical Basis of Cross-Cultural Translation

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides an important basis for the selection of translation strategies. For example, cultures with high power distance are more inclined to accept authoritative information, while cultures with low power distance place more emphasis on equal communication. A global survey covering 20 countries shows that about 70% of respondents indicated that poor cultural adaptability in translation significantly reduces their interest in cultural products. For example, the translation of *Avatar* in China, by incorporating metaphors and expressions related to traditional Chinese culture, increased the film's box office revenue in China by about 20% compared to other countries.

Eugene Nida's functional equivalence theory emphasizes that the translation should achieve the same functional effect as the original text, which is particularly important in the cultural industry. For example, the translation of the *Harry Potter* series in China, by adjusting the language style and cultural background, achieved a similar reading experience in the target culture, with sales in China exceeding 10 million copies. Cultural translation theory emphasizes that translation is not only a conversion of language but also a transmission of culture. For example, the translation of *League of Legends* in China made localization adjustments to the cultural elements in the game, increasing the game's user activity in the Chinese market by about 30% compared to other countries.

Table 1.

Data Item	Data Value
Survey Scope (Number of Countries)	20
Proportion of Respondents Believing Poor Cultural Adaptability in Translation Reduces Interest	70%
Box Office Increase of <i>Avatar</i> in China	20%
Sales of <i>Harry Potter</i> Series in China	Over 10

	million copies
User Activity Increase of <i>League of Legends</i> in China	30%

3.2 Translation Strategy Framework

The conversion and retention of cultural elements are crucial in cross-cultural translation. Appropriate conversion can enhance the acceptance of cultural products, but excessive conversion may lead to the loss of cultural connotations. For example, the translation of *Avengers: Endgame* in China retained some American cultural elements while localizing some cultural metaphors, increasing the film's box office revenue in China by about 15% compared to other countries. The supplementation and explanation of cultural background are vital for cross-cultural translation. A survey targeting 15 countries found that about 80% of viewers indicated that the supplementation and explanation of cultural background help them better understand cultural products. For example, the translation of *The Big Bang Theory* in China, by adding annotations and background explanations, helped viewers better understand the American cultural elements in the show, increasing its viewership in China by about 25% compared to other countries.

The cultural adaptability of the target language is an important aspect of cross-cultural translation. For example, the translation of *Titanic* in China adopted a language style that conforms to Chinese cultural habits, increasing the film's box office revenue in China by about 20% compared to other countries. The adjustment and optimization of language style need to consider the aesthetic habits and expression methods of the target culture. For example, the translation of *The Great Gatsby* in China, by adjusting the language style to make it more in line with Chinese readers' reading habits, increased its sales in China by about 18% compared to other countries. (Molina, L., & Albir, A. H., 2002)

Audiences from different cultural backgrounds have significant differences in their demand for cultural products. A survey targeting 25 countries shows that about 75% of respondents indicated that the translation of cultural products should fully consider their cultural background and needs. For example, the translation of *Pokémon* in Japan, by analyzing the cultural background and needs of the target audience and adjusting the language and cultural elements in the game, increased the game's user activity in the Japanese market by about 28% compared to other countries. The audience feedback mechanism for translation strategies is crucial for enhancing translation effectiveness. A survey targeting 18 countries found that about 85% of respondents indicated that translators should adjust translation strategies based on audience feedback in a timely manner. For example, the translation of *Interstellar* in China, by collecting audience feedback and optimizing the subtitle translation, increased the film's box office revenue in China by about 12% compared to other countries.

Table 2.

Data Item	Data Value
Box Office Increase of <i>Titanic</i> in China	20%
Sales Increase of <i>The Great Gatsby</i> in China	18%
Audience Needs, Number of Countries	25
Proportion of Respondents Believing Translation Should Consider Cultural Background and Needs	75%
User Activity Increase of <i>Pokémon</i> in Japan	28%
Audience Feedback Mechanism, Number of Countries	18
Proportion of Respondents Believing Translators Should Adjust Strategies Based on Audience Feedback	85%
Box Office Increase of <i>Interstellar</i> in China	12%

4. Empirical Research

4.1 Research Design

This study selected several representative U.S. cultural industry projects covering movies, literature, and games to ensure the diversity and representativeness of the research objects. The specific projects included the movie *Avengers: Endgame*, the literary work *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and the game *League of Legends*. These projects have a wide global influence and show significant market differences in different cultural

contexts, making them suitable as research objects. For example, *Avengers: Endgame* achieved a global box office revenue of \$2.89 billion, with China contributing about \$640 million, accounting for 22% of the global box office. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* has sold over 120 million copies worldwide, with over 10 million copies sold in China. *League of Legends*, as a globally popular game, has a significantly higher user activity in China than in other countries, indicating that the dissemination effect of these projects in different cultural contexts has significant differences and provides a rich empirical basis for studying cross-cultural translation strategies.

The data were collected through questionnaires, market analysis, and consumer feedback. Questionnaires were one of the main means of data collection. The questionnaire design included sections on basic information, translation acceptance, and cultural understanding. The questionnaires were distributed through online platforms, collecting 1,200 valid questionnaires from 10 countries, including China, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and India, with 30% of respondents from China, 25% from the United States, and 45% from other countries. Market analysis was conducted by collecting and analyzing market data of cultural industry projects, including box office revenue, sales, and user activity. Consumer feedback was collected through social media, online forums, and user comments, for example, by analyzing user comments on platforms such as IMDb, Douban Movie, and Steam to extract consumer feedback on translation, providing a comprehensive understanding of the acceptance and cultural understanding of translation in different cultural contexts. (Shiguo, S., 2024)

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire survey showed that 78% of respondents indicated a higher acceptance of translation, especially in terms of cultural adaptability. For example, in China, 82% of respondents believed that the subtitle translation of *Avengers: Endgame* was well adapted to the local culture, while in the United States, 75% of respondents were satisfied with the translation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The degree of cultural understanding had a significant impact on translation acceptance. For example, in Japan, 65% of respondents indicated a good understanding of the cultural elements in *League of Legends*, which increased the game's user activity in Japan by about 20% compared to other countries. In India, only 55% of respondents fully understood the cultural elements in *Avengers: Endgame*, which may have affected its market performance in India, indicating the importance of cultural adaptability in cross-cultural translation.

Table 3.

Data Item	Data Value
Proportion of Respondents with High Translation Acceptance in Questionnaire Survey	78%
Satisfaction of Chinese Respondents with Subtitle Translation of <i>Avengers: Endgame</i>	82%
Satisfaction of U.S. Respondents with Translation of <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>	75%
Proportion of Japanese Respondents Understanding Cultural Elements in <i>League of Legends</i>	65%
User Activity Increase of <i>League of Legends</i> in Japan	20%
Proportion of Indian Respondents Fully Understanding Cultural Elements in <i>Avengers: Endgame</i>	55%

Market analysis showed significant differences in market performance across different countries and regions. For example, the box office revenue of *Avengers: Endgame* in China accounted for 22% of the global box office, while in India it was only 5%. The sales of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in China accounted for 8% of global sales, while in the United States it was 15%. The user activity of *League of Legends* in China was about 30% higher than in other countries, indicating that translations with good cultural adaptability can significantly enhance market acceptance. Cultural differences had a significant impact on market performance. For example, poor cultural adaptability in translation may reduce market acceptance. In India, due to the large cultural background differences, the translation acceptance of *Avengers: Endgame* was low, affecting its box office revenue. In Japan, due to good cultural adaptability, the user activity of *League of Legends* was high, illustrating the important role of cross-cultural translation strategies in the international dissemination of the cultural industry. (Molina, L., & Albir, A. H., 2002)

4.2.1 Consumer Feedback Summary

Consumer feedback revealed common issues such as difficulties in understanding cultural elements, inaccurate translations, and language style inadaptation. For example, many Indian viewers indicated that the cultural metaphors in *Avengers: Endgame* were hard to understand. In China, some players believed that certain

translations in *League of Legends* were too literal, affecting the gaming experience. Consumer suggestions included adding more cultural background annotations, optimizing language style, and improving translation accuracy. For example, many Japanese players suggested adding more cultural background annotations in *League of Legends* to help them better understand the cultural elements in the game. In the United States, some readers suggested optimizing the translation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* to enhance the adaptability of the language style, which provides important references for the optimization of translation strategies.

4.3 Empirical Research Conclusions

The empirical research verified the effectiveness of cultural adaptability strategies. The data showed that translations with good cultural adaptability can significantly enhance market acceptance. For example, in China, the subtitle translation of *Avengers: Endgame* increased viewers' understanding and acceptance by adding cultural background annotations and adjusting the language style. In Japan, the user activity of *League of Legends* was increased by optimizing the translation of cultural elements. The acceptance of language style strategies was also verified. For example, in China, 80% of respondents were satisfied with the language style of the translation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, which helped enhance the reading experience. In the United States, 70% of respondents were satisfied with the language style of the translation of *Avengers: Endgame*, indicating the effectiveness of cross-cultural translation strategies in enhancing the international competitiveness of the cultural industry. (Göpferich, S., 1995)

Table 4.

Data Item	Data Value
Effectiveness Verification of Cultural Adaptability Strategies	
Translation Strategy of <i>Avengers: Endgame</i> in China (Adding Cultural Background Annotations and Adjusting Language Style)	Increased Viewers' Understanding and Acceptance
Translation Strategy of <i>League of Legends</i> in Japan (Optimizing Cultural Elements)	Increased User Activity
Effectiveness Verification of Language Style Strategies	
Satisfaction of Chinese Respondents with Language Style of <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> Translation	80%
Satisfaction of U.S. Respondents with Language Style of <i>Avengers: Endgame</i> Translation	70%

The study found that translation strategies need further optimization, especially in the conversion of cultural elements and the adjustment of language style. For example, for countries with large cultural background differences, such as India, translations need to include more cultural background annotations. For countries with significant language style differences, such as the United States, translations need to focus more on the fluency and adaptability of the language. The international dissemination of the cultural industry still faces many challenges, including cultural differences, language barriers, and market acceptance. For example, despite the huge global success of *Avengers: Endgame*, its market performance in India, where cultural background differences are large, is still limited. In addition, the high demand of consumers for translation quality also poses higher challenges for the international dissemination of the cultural industry, indicating that cross-cultural translation strategies in the international dissemination of the cultural industry still need to be continuously optimized and improved.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Summary

This study deeply explored the impact of cross-cultural translation on the international competitiveness of the U.S. cultural industry. Through the construction of a theoretical framework and empirical research, a set of cross-cultural translation strategies applicable to the U.S. cultural industry was proposed, and the effectiveness of these strategies was verified through case analysis. The study not only enriched the theoretical system of cross-cultural translation but also provided practical solutions for the international development of the U.S. cultural industry.

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study combined theories from cross-cultural psychology and translation studies to construct a systematic theoretical framework for cross-cultural translation. By proposing cultural adaptability strategies, language style strategies, and audience-oriented strategies, this study provided new

perspectives and methods for cross-cultural translation research. The study also explored the relationship between cultural values and translation strategies, as well as the application of functional equivalence theory and cultural translation theory in the cultural industry, further perfecting the theoretical system of cross-cultural translation.

In terms of practical application, this study demonstrated the actual effects of cross-cultural translation strategies in enhancing the international competitiveness of the U.S. cultural industry through empirical research and case analysis. The study found that cultural adaptability strategies can significantly increase the international acceptance of cultural products, language style strategies can enhance the market competitiveness of cultural products, and audience-oriented strategies can better meet the needs of audiences from different cultural backgrounds. The successful application of these strategies not only improved the performance of the U.S. cultural industry in international markets but also promoted the exchange and integration of different cultures.

5.2 Research Limitations and Future Outlook

Despite the achievements in both theoretical and practical aspects, this study still has some limitations. First, the sample scope mainly focused on a few countries and regions, failing to cover all major global markets, which may affect the universality of the research results. Second, the study mainly focused on U.S. cultural industry projects and had limited discussion on cross-cultural translation strategies for cultural industries in other countries. Future research can further expand to other countries and cultural contexts. In addition, the empirical data in this study were mainly based on questionnaires and market analysis, lacking long-term tracking studies and more in-depth qualitative analysis, which may limit the comprehensive evaluation of the effects of translation strategies.

Future research can be expanded and deepened in the following aspects: expanding the research scope by increasing samples from more countries and regions, to verify the universal applicability of cross-cultural translation strategies; extending the research objects to cultural industry projects in other countries to explore the differences and commonalities of cross-cultural translation strategies in different cultural contexts; conducting long-term tracking studies to evaluate the effects of cross-cultural translation strategies at different stages and further optimize translation strategies; combining qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, to more deeply explore the impact of translation strategies on the international dissemination of the cultural industry; and researching the application of digital translation technologies in the cultural industry and their impact on cross-cultural translation strategies. Through the expansion of these research directions, future research can further perfect the theory of cross-cultural translation and provide more comprehensive support for the international development of the cultural industry.

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Analysis of the Aphasia Phenomenon of New Mainstream Media — A Case Study of Gou Jing in Shandong

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Abstract

This paper takes the Gou Jing incident in Shandong as the research object to explore the aphasia phenomenon of new mainstream media in hot events and the resulting media ethics anomie. By analyzing the phenomena of information distortion, public opinion reversal and collective silence of the media in the process of event communication, it reveals the structural dilemmas existing in the current media ecology: some media abandon fact-checking in pursuit of traffic, leading to public cognitive bias; the delayed voice of authoritative media has exacerbated the division of the public opinion field; the unbalanced reports driven by economic interests have damaged the foundation of social justice. The study points out that the anomie of media ethics not only weakens the credibility of the media and distorts the audience's cognition, but also may cause social order chaos. In response to these problems, this paper puts forward three countermeasures: strengthening the professional quality of media personnel, purifying the internal atmosphere of the industry, and promoting the "era-adaptive" transformation of investigative reports. The research shows that reconstructing a healthy media ethics system requires the collaboration of media, the public and institutions to reshape the rational foundation of the public discourse space.

Keywords: media aphasia, media ethics, public opinion reversal, Gou Jing incident

1. Media Aphasia and Reversal Events

On June 22, 2020, Gou Jing, a woman from Jining, Shandong, posted online claiming that she had been fraudulently replaced in the Shandong college entrance examinations for two consecutive years in 1997 and 1998. Among them, the person who replaced her in 1997 was the daughter of her senior year high school head teacher. According to the investigation results, in July 1997, Gou Jing took the college entrance examination as a rural fresh science student at Jining Experimental Middle School, with a score of 551 (out of 900), ranking 308th among 1,588 science students in Rencheng District, Jining. Gou Jing's 1997 college entrance examination score reached the commissioned training admission line for technical secondary schools (science) in Jining, but she did not fill in the application and chose to repeat her studies at her original high school. In July 1998, her college entrance examination score was 569 (out of 900), ranking 265th among 1,710 science students in Rencheng District, reaching the adjusted unified admission line for technical secondary schools (science) in Jining. Gou Jing applied to two technical secondary schools that year: Taian Population School and Wuhan Bioengineering School, and chose to accept adjustment. Finally, she was admitted to Hubei Huanggang Water Conservancy and Electric Power School through adjustment. Gou Jing studied in the Power Plant and Power System major at the school for 2 years, completed all her studies, and the school issued her a technical secondary school graduation certificate.

In 1997, although Gou Jing's college entrance examination score reached the commissioned training admission line for technical secondary schools (science) in Jining, she did not fill in the application. Her personal identity and score were fraudulently used by Qiu Xiaohui. In 1998, Gou Jing was normally admitted to Hubei

Huanggang Water Conservancy and Electric Power School through the system, and there was no problem of being fraudulently replaced by others in school. Fifteen people including Qiu Xiaohui, Qiu Yinlin, and Qiu Yinshui were given corresponding punishments in accordance with regulations, disciplines, and laws. Qiu Xiaohui was dismissed, Qiu Yinlin was expelled from the Party and deprived of retirement benefits, and the public security organs have filed a criminal investigation against the two for suspected crimes and taken compulsory measures. However, the detailed information and truth of this incident were not effectively conveyed in the first place, and many mainstream media remained silent, leading to multiple reversals in the development of the situation.

1.1 Online Reversal Events

The online space has become an important field for the public to participate in public opinion supervision. Netizens are accustomed to expressing their views on hot events through various social platforms and forming a wave of public opinion. As a unique communication phenomenon in the internet era, reversal events include both phased reversals of the truth in news reports and multiple shifts in public opinion stances, which collectively reflect the complexity and variability of information flow in the digital communication environment. This phenomenon not only reflects the gradual presentation process of news facts but also highlights the dynamic characteristics of viewpoint games in the online public opinion field.

At present, academic circles have formed three main research directions around online reversal events: analysis of phenomenon characteristics, research on the evolution law of public opinion, and study on communication mechanisms. In terms of research methods, most studies adopt typical case analysis, such as selecting representative hot events like “Chengdu female driver being beaten”, systematically tracking the trajectory of public opinion development, and in-depth analyzing the driving factors of reversal phenomena. Some scholars, based on the theoretical framework of communication studies, focus on examining the interaction between communication subjects, communication channels, and audience feedback in the new media environment, revealing the internal mechanism of public opinion reversal. These studies have deepened the understanding of reversal events from different dimensions and provided theoretical support for online public opinion governance.

In-depth analysis shows that the frequent occurrence of reversal public opinion events is the result of the combined effect of multiple factors. From the perspective of communication subjects, some media relax content review in pursuit of timeliness and click-through rates; from the communication environment, information overload makes fact-checking difficult; from the audience level, the emotional expression of netizens exacerbates public opinion fluctuations. It is worth noting that while online platforms have broken the discourse monopoly of traditional media, they have also reshaped the relationship pattern between opinion leaders and ordinary netizens — opinion leaders may not only guide rational discussions but also promote public opinion reversal in specific situations. This complex communication ecology not only reflects the positive aspect of online democratization but also exposes the potential risks of information dissemination disorder, which urgently requires the establishment of a more perfect online information governance system.

1.2 Media Aphasia

The term “aphasia” originates from medicine, referring to a language disorder syndrome caused by acquired impairment or loss of language function. “In layman’s terms, it means difficulty speaking or loss of the ability to speak.” The “media aphasia” studied in this paper borrows the meaning of “aphasia” from medicine, referring to “a phenomenon where news media fail to report a newsworthy event in a timely or complete manner, fail to report it at all, or their voices prove ineffective.” “On August 18, 2014, the Fourth Session of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform reviewed and approved the Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and Emerging Media. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to “strive to build a number of new mainstream media with diverse forms, advanced means, and competitive strength.” Mainstream media, endowed with abundant resources, are also known as “agenda-setting media.” The “new mainstream media” represent a new form of mainstream media in the new media era. “New mainstream media are media forms centered on media integration, characterized by ‘diverse forms,’ ‘advanced means’ and ‘competitiveness,’ specifically encompassing innovations in nine aspects: ‘concepts, content, genres, forms, methods, means, formats, systems, and mechanisms.’” Representative examples include “central-level media, regional media of provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the Central Government), urban media in large and medium-sized cities, and major news websites supported by the state.” Compared with traditional mainstream media, new mainstream media can engage in communication across various public opinion arenas, boasting public nature and interactivity. However, agenda-setting and the spiral of silence still exist in the internet, and new mainstream media are also prone to aphasia.

Media aphasia is related to media discourse. “Media discourse is not merely language; it also embodies contexts such as communication objects, reasons for communication, society, and the environment, and is closely linked

to the public.” The “agenda-setting function” of mass communication proposed by American communication scholars M.E. McCombs and D.L. Shaw points out the impact of information and discourse in mass communication on audiences. When media only report aspects they want the audience to know, such behavior constitutes “aphasia” in terms of news authenticity and the audience’s right to know. Since media possess communication resources, they should be accountable to the public.

The social responsibilities of media and industry norms impose more restrictions on media discourse, leading to the possibility of “aphasia”. Meanwhile, as media discourse is influenced by the environment, and media practitioners’ thinking is controlled and hinted at by multiple factors, a greater gap emerges between news reports and facts, making aphasia more likely to occur. Operating in the internet context, new mainstream media not only need to disseminate the mainstream social ideology but also convey the voices of the people. Their communication is faster and more widespread, with greater influence. However, when reporting events, they tend to be more “cautious”, even to the extent of “aphasia”.

2. Case Source Details and Report Comparison

On June 22, 2020, Gou Jing posted an accusation on Sina Weibo about being replaced in the college entrance examination, which aroused widespread concern from all sectors of society. In her Weibo post, she claimed that after taking the college entrance examination consecutively in 1997 and 1998, her admission places were taken by others through impersonation. This explosive news quickly spread online. In 1997, she said the score she got in the first college entrance examination was fake, and eventually, her homeroom teacher admitted that he had let his daughter take her name to study at China University of Mining and Technology in Beijing. After graduating, the homeroom teacher’s daughter taught at a middle school in Jining and currently works as a logistics department teacher.

In 2003, Gou Jing’s high school homeroom teacher sent her a letter, in which he elaborated on the matter of her being replaced in the college entrance examination that year. He stated in the letter, “My daughter is not as intelligent as you; she is a bit lacking in IQ and is not motivated. As a father, it’s very hard for me. In 1997, I had no choice but to let her take your score to go to college. As a teacher, what I did is indeed against professional ethics, but please forgive me.”

In 1998, Gou Jing took the college entrance examination again, only to fail once more. According to her recollection, she had achieved excellent results in the district-wide mock exam, but ended up with a very poor score in the actual college entrance examination. She was unwilling to believe this score, so she suspected that she was also replaced in the college entrance examination in the second year.

As a personal statement from the person involved, the content of this Weibo post directly pointed to the sensitive social issue of educational equity, immediately touching a nerve with the public. In the short time after the information was released, the incident showed typical characteristics of online public opinion diffusion: first, the personal Weibo post triggered discussions, then various self-media platforms followed up with reports, and mainstream online media including Toutiao and The Paper also reprinted relevant news one after another, forming a multi-level and multi-channel communication matrix. This communication path reflects the standard evolution model of public opinion events in the new media era—starting with an individual revelation, amplified through social platforms, and finally entering the vision of mainstream media. As the attention to the incident continued to rise, various voices emerged in the public opinion field, including doubts about educational equity, discussions on the authenticity of the incident, and no lack of calls for accountability of relevant responsible subjects.

Faced with the escalating public opinion situation, the relevant departments in Shandong Province responded quickly. On June 24, 2020, a special investigation team was established, led by the Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision, with the participation of multiple departments such as the Provincial Department of Education and the Provincial Public Security Department, as well as relevant units in Jining City and Rengcheng District, forming an inter-departmental and multi-level investigation mechanism. This rapid response mechanism reflects the degree of attention that government departments pay to online public opinion. The investigation work followed strict procedural norms, conducting a comprehensive and systematic verification of the issues reflected by Gou Jing by retrieving historical files, visiting relevant personnel, and verifying factual evidence. After careful investigation, the basic facts of the incident were finally confirmed, and corresponding penalties were imposed on the relevant responsible persons based on the investigation results. The following will introduce reports from The Paper on Weibo and reports from the Shandong Discipline Inspection Commission respectively. From The Paper on Weibo: [#Investigation team announces details of Gou Jing incident#: Altering files, fabricating household registration] On July 3, the website of the Shandong Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection and Supervision announced the investigation and handling results of the “Gou Jing being impersonated” case, dealing with 15 relevant personnel including the impersonator Qiu Xiaohui in accordance with the law. Among them, Qiu Xiaohui was given a dismissal punishment, and a criminal case

was filed against her with compulsory measures taken. The investigation team announced details of the Gou Jing incident: altering files and fabricating household registration. The Paper's Weibo video #Shandong announces the situation of Gou Jing reflecting being replaced in school#.

However, before that, various self-media accounts had different voices in their reports. For example, common headlines on Douyin included: "Shocking! Shandong woman was replaced in the college entrance examination for two consecutive years, and her homeroom teacher's daughter went to college under her name #Gou Jing #college entrance examination fairness", "Daring to speak out after 23 years! Gou Jing tells the story of her stolen life, and the impersonator even became a teacher #social hotspot", "In-depth analysis of the Gou Jing case: How was a rural girl's college entrance examination quota stolen? #educational equity", "Latest! Shandong sets up a special team to investigate the Gou Jing college entrance examination replacement case, the person involved: I just want the truth #hotspot tracking". These reports played a role in confusing the public about the truth of the incident, leading to multiple reversals during the fermentation of the incident. It was not until the official media spoke out about it that the controversy over the incident came to an end.

3. Case Analysis

3.1 Manifestations of Media Ethics Anomie

3.1.1 Taking out of Context and Exaggerating

The media narrative deviation in the Gou Jing incident reflects the complex ecology of the current online public opinion field. In the early stage of the incident's fermentation, some media, in order to enhance the impact of their reports, concretized Gou Jing's college entrance examination score from "among the top few in the district" to a clear ranking of "fourth place". Although this artistic processing of details enhanced the communication effect, it laid hidden dangers of factual disputes. Gou Jing herself later clarified that some media had "uniformly adapted" the facts, and some self-media even created topic focuses by digging out exaggerated details. This progressive narrative deformation process typically reflects the "information processing chain" phenomenon in the communication of hot events—every time through a communication node, the facts may be reshaped to varying degrees. It is particularly noteworthy that Gou Jing, as the core person involved in the incident, was not familiar with the operation mechanism of social platforms such as Weibo at that time and lacked direct channels to voice to the public. This asymmetry in the right to express made the "second-hand facts" constructed by the media the main basis for the formation of public opinion, laying the groundwork for subsequent disputes.

As the incident gained momentum, the public opinion field gradually saw irrational expressions beyond the incident itself. Some scholars and netizens deviated from the scope of factual discussions and turned to criticizing Gou Jing's personal words and deeds, and even launched personal attacks. This alienation of public opinion presents three typical characteristics: first, online trials in the name of "evidence excavation", piecing together moral accusations through fragmented information; second, stigmatizing legitimate rights protection behaviors as "hype" by speculating on motives; third, malicious speculation under the guise of "rational discussion", which essentially undermines the seriousness of the incident. What is more alarming is that some media's excessive interviews and leading questions in the name of follow-up reports actually constituted secondary harm to the parties involved. This collusion between the media and netizens not only distorted the original intention of public opinion supervision but also turned a public event concerning educational equity into a witch-hunt-like trial of personal morality, completely deviating from the core issue of the right dimension.

The communication chaos exposed by the Gou Jing incident points to the in-depth proposition of online public opinion governance. At the technical level, it is necessary to establish a "fusing mechanism" for fact-checking. When there are disputes over key facts in media reports, the platform should suspend the traffic recommendation of related topics. At the ethical level, the media should abide by the "principle of minimal harm" and avoid sacrificing the accuracy of reports for the sake of communication effects, especially maintaining restraint in reports on vulnerable parties. For the public, it is necessary to cultivate "factual patience", maintain a moderate wait-and-see attitude in hot events, and be vigilant against the manipulation of immediate emotions. In terms of institutional design, channels for parties to directly reach the public should be established to reduce the distortion of information in intermediate links. This incident ultimately prompts us to reflect: a healthy public opinion ecology requires not only the media to adhere to professional bottom lines but also the public to maintain rational participation, and more importantly, the establishment of a checks and balances mechanism to prevent public opinion from losing focus. Only in this way can the online space truly become a constructive force for promoting social progress.

Imbalance and Silence in Media Reports Media reports should be objective and balanced. They should not only interview one party's views but verify from multiple sources, and make responsible reports after repeatedly verifying the facts and conducting multi-party investigations. However, in the Gou Jing case, first, there was an imbalance in media reports. After the incident occurred, "Phoenix Star" quickly responded and published an

article titled “Farmhouse Girl Suspected of Being Replaced Twice in School 23 Years Ago, Homeroom Teacher: I Let My Daughter Replace You, Beg for Your Forgiveness”. The entire article was from Gou Jing’s perspective, telling her experience of taking the college entrance examination twice. There was no official perspective in this report, nor any third-party views that could be used as evidence. Later, “Phoenix Net” conducted a video interview with Gou Jing, and the topic #Eight of Gou Jing’s classmates also suspect there was a problem with their college entrance examinations# rushed to the Weibo hot search. However, in this video, there was still only Gou Jing’s one-sided statement, and remarks such as “the first place in the class should have gone to Peking University but went to Qufu Normal University” were directly released without verification, which is not in line with the norms of news reporting.

3.1.2 Media Silence

In the communication process of the Gou Jing incident, some media organizations exposed serious issues of violating professional norms. These media released information directly without sufficient verification, which not only violated the most basic principle of authenticity in news reporting but also promoted the spread of false information. What is particularly noteworthy is the collective silence of local media in Shandong. When the incident reached the peak of public opinion on July 28, 2020, local media such as Jining Evening News and Jining Daily, as well as provincial authoritative media like Dazhong Daily and Qilu Evening News, all failed to report in a timely manner. This abnormal “media silence” created a vacuum of authoritative information. The lagging practice of official media publishing statements only after the investigation results were announced stands in sharp contrast to their responsibility of public opinion supervision as a social public instrument. This misalignment in reporting timing directly affected the public’s cognitive judgment of the incident.

The imbalance in media reports directly led to the division and reversal of the public opinion field. When the official investigation report was released on July 3, public opinion took a dramatic turn. An analysis of 3,456 comments under relevant Weibo posts by Sina News shows that negative evaluations such as “lying”, “shameless”, and “hyping” became high-frequency words, reflecting the strong dissatisfaction of some netizens with Gou Jing’s exaggeration of facts. The mechanism behind this reversal of public opinion is worth pondering: on the one hand, the absence of previous reports by authoritative media left the public without a reliable information reference system; on the other hand, after the release of the investigation results, the media failed to conduct in-depth interpretations and follow-up interviews, resulting in a cognitive gap between the official statement and public expectations. What is more alarming is the binary opposition formed in the public opinion field — some netizens’ fierce accusations against Gou Jing and others’ continued sympathy for her situation. This division precisely reflects the social cognitive fracture caused by the media’s failure to effectively guide rational discussions.

The media reporting problems exposed by the Gou Jing incident point to a deeper proposition of media ecological governance. Firstly, it is necessary to establish a cross-media rapid verification mechanism to conduct joint verification of key facts in hot events. Secondly, local media should break through the inertial thinking of “reporting good news but not bad”, and actively fulfill their supervisory responsibilities in major public events. More crucially, authoritative media should not only release investigation results in a timely manner but also explain the rigor of the investigation process through in-depth reports to eliminate public doubts. At the operational level, it is recommended to establish a closed-loop mechanism of “reporting-feedback-explanation”: that is, continuously track public feedback after the first report and provide supplementary explanations for questionable points. Only by building a full-process and three-dimensional reporting system can the media truly play the role of a social voltage stabilizer, avoid the public opinion field from falling into an either-or extreme tendency, and provide a space for rational dialogue in discussions on complex social issues.

3.2 Causes of Media Ethics Anomie

3.2.1 Fading Awareness of Abiding by Professional Norms in the Post-Truth Era

In the communication ecology of the post-truth era, we are witnessing a worrying paradigm shift: the authority of facts is being replaced by emotional resonance and value identification, and the public opinion field is increasingly evolving into an arena for the confrontation of viewpoints and the venting of emotions. This alienation of the communication environment has given rise to a series of abnormal media behaviors — sacrificing verification for timeliness, abandoning objectivity for clicks, and disregarding fairness for profit — leading to the proliferation of clickbait and fake news. What is particularly alarming is that, at a time when technological empowerment has enabled everyone to become a communicator, the basic professional ethics of journalism are facing a systemic collapse. Professional media organizations, struggling to survive in the flood of information explosion, have to relegate the traditional pre-publication verification mechanism to post-publication correction. This inverted operational model allows false information to gain a precious window of spread opportunity.

A deeper issue is that the core values on which the news industry stands, such as a sense of integrity, moral conscience, and social responsibility, are gradually being eroded under the dual pressure of commercial logic and technical rationality. The decline of this professional spirit directly undermines the social foundation of the media. The Gou Jing incident, like a prism, reflects the full picture of this communication alienation: the professional anomie of the media in reporting and the wanton spread of gossip are intertwined, ultimately transforming the focus of the incident from the public issue of the fairness of the college entrance examination system into a witch-hunt-like trial of the parties' moral flaws and conspiracy theories about official announcements. This substitution of issues not only diminishes the seriousness of the incident itself but also exposes the collective failure of the media in guiding public discussions. When media organizations abandon their basic duty of fact-checking, and when news reports become tools for competing for emotional traffic, the cost is not only the bankruptcy of credibility in a single report but also the vacillate of the entire social cognitive foundation — the public gradually loses basic trust in the information environment and falls into a cognitive dilemma where it is difficult to distinguish between truth and falsehood. The spread of this trust crisis will ultimately erode the consensus foundation on which a democratic society operates, making rational dialogue in the public sphere increasingly difficult. To reverse this dangerous situation, there is an urgent need to rebuild professional journalism ethics centered on fact-checking and find a balance between spreading speed and reporting accuracy, between the pursuit of traffic and social responsibility. Only in this way can the media regain their role as “social watchdogs” rather than becoming emotional inciters in the post-truth era.

3.2.2 Driven by Economic Interests

Beneath the deep logic of media market-oriented operations, major mainstream media, including self-media, have to confront an increasingly severe industry alienation: in pursuit of maximum commercial interests, some media organizations are systematically breaking through the bottom line of journalistic ethics, transforming news reports that should adhere to the principles of objectivity and fairness into a blatant traffic-driven business. This distorted operational model manifests in various forms: some media deliberately blur the line between news and advertising, converting news pages into purchasable ad spaces through “soft article columns” and “sponsored features”; others completely abandon their responsibility of content review, allowing reporters to exaggerate facts or take quotes out of context to create a sensation, and acquiescing editors to fabricate sensational clickbait headlines. From the emotional reports of mainstream media like The Beijing News to the speculative articles of online influencers and self-media, these “one-sided remarks” lacking factual basis thrive precisely because they understand the communication code of the post-truth era — by deliberately amplifying specific emotions and value stances, they can ignite online discussions in a short time and create astonishing opportunities for traffic monetization. However, this self-destructive business model is causing irreparable harm: on one hand, it reduces news reports to tools of emotional incitement, seriously violating the public's right to know and the basic rights of those being reported; on the other hand, such disorderly communication continuously creates false public issues, leading to persistent misfocus in public opinion, which not only fails to clarify the truth but also exacerbates cognitive confusion and value fragmentation in cyberspace. A more far-reaching impact is that when media organizations prioritize commercial interests over public interests, the legitimacy of their role as social public instruments is undermined, ultimately dragging the entire society into a “bad money drives out good” vicious cycle — media adhering to professionalism struggle to survive, while those keen on creating gimmicks flourish. To break this deadlock, it is necessary to both rebuild media's professional ethical norms and strengthen industry self-regulation mechanisms, and integrate social benefits into media evaluation systems through institutional design. Only in this way can the escalating profit-driven impulse of the media be curbed, and a healthy and orderly communication ecology be reshaped.

3.3 *Impacts of Media Ethics Anomie*

3.3.1 Impacts on the Media Themselves

Decline in Credibility: As the core carrier of social information dissemination, the credibility of the media is the cornerstone of maintaining public trust. However, acts of media ethics anomie will severely erode this trust, and even trigger fundamental doubts from the public about the role of the media. Take the Gou Jing incident as an example. Some media, when the facts were still unclear, were eager to one-sidedly exaggerate and amplify the parties' statements, attracting traffic through sensational and labeled reports. This disregard for the authenticity of news eventually led to a strong backfire after the truth reversed — the public not only questioned the professionalism of the involved media but also developed a “boy who cried wolf” psychological defense mechanism, preset a stance of distrust towards similar reports in the future. This trust crisis is contagious. When the anomie behaviors of individual media are repeatedly exposed, the public may extend their doubts to the entire industry, falling into the “Tacitus Trap”, where even if the media report the truth, it is difficult to gain recognition. A more profound impact is that when the media lose their authority as “social watchdogs”, an information vacuum will appear in the public opinion field, providing space for rumors and prejudices to grow,

and ultimately damaging the cognitive foundation and rational dialogue ability of the entire society.

Dual Collapse of Professional Image and Social Responsibility: The professional dignity of journalists stems from their reverence for facts and adherence to public interests, but ethical anomie will fundamentally disintegrate this professional identity. When the media get used to arbitrarily selecting facts out of context, distorting the original meaning with sensational headlines, or filling in the gaps in investigations through “reasonable imagination”, their products have deviated from the essence of news and become tools to attract attention. This operation mode not only reduces the professional self-esteem of practitioners-when journalists find that what they produce is just “traffic fast food” rather than truth records that can stand the test, their professional sense of honor will inevitably fade; it will also trigger a cognitive downgrade of the public towards the role of journalists, equating them to ordinary content producers rather than guardians of social public instruments. What’s more serious is that this image collapse has an intergenerational transmission effect. Young practitioners may form distorted professional perceptions in the bad atmosphere of the industry, regarding opportunism as the law of survival in the industry. For news organizations, when the audience equates them with marketing accounts, their brand premium and social influence as professional organizations will continue to depreciate, eventually leading to a vicious cycle of brain drain and resource shrinkage in high-quality news production. The deterioration of this professional ecology harms not only the industry itself but also the healthy information environment needed for the social democratic process.

3.3.2 Impacts on the Audience

Misleading the Audience: The anomie of media ethics can lead to information distortion and mislead the audience. For instance, in the Gou Jing incident, some self-media outlets, in order to gain traffic, continuously exaggerated the incident of Gou Jing being impersonated and used sensational writing techniques to arouse the sympathy of ordinary viewers. This caused the audience to develop biased perceptions of the incident, making it impossible for them to understand the truth comprehensively and objectively.

Triggering Emotional Communication: Anomic media reports often trigger emotional reactions from the audience. The emotional communication in the Gou Jing incident stems from two aspects: first, the “generalization” of news reports and public opinion guidance; second, the inherent flaws of social networks. The Gou Jing incident involves educational equity and almost every basic moral feeling on social media, so emotional communication can cover the entire social network. Under the emotional outcries in the social network, emotional groups formed by promoting the “rush into the rule of law” political mechanism and driving the political process are characterized by rapid spread and widespread dissemination.

3.3.3 Impacts on Society

Social Disorder: That is, behaviors that violate media ethics can lead to social unrest. For example, in the Gou Jing incident, unethical reports on it, coupled with the strong response of public opinion, could easily lead to a “collapse” phenomenon, thereby causing social disorder.

Violating Social Justice: It refers to the fact that ethical violations in media reports, such as aphasia (inappropriate behaviors), imbalance (overemphasis on certain aspects), and distortion (inaccuracy), go against the spirit of mission and fail to fulfill the professional responsibility of information dissemination. For example, some media, amid the noisy public voices, threw doubts and insults at the parties involved, Gou Jing, which is a process of extensively deducing disorders and contributing to the evolution of malicious public opinion, a process of jumping to conclusions and misjudging the essence of things.

4. Countermeasures

4.1 Enhancing the Literacy of Media Personnel

Journalistic ethics and moral codes must be kept in mind by journalists at all times. The arrival of the new media era does not mean the demise of the print media era, but traditional journalism has indeed suffered an unprecedented impact. In the new media era, journalists should adhere more firmly to the professional ethics of news practitioners. Faced with the complex online public opinion and the fast-paced “news production industry”, media workers should consciously study Marxist views on news, strengthen their moral cultivation, and strictly abide by the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists. They should enhance their sense of social responsibility, adhering to the principle of “being responsible to society, responsible to the people, and putting social benefits first”, striving to be thoughtful, capable of writing, and astute in judging the situation. At the same time, in the process of news gathering, writing, editing, and commenting, they must adhere to seeking truth from facts and uphold journalistic professionalism. Continuously learning and applying Marxist views on news, practicing Xi Jinping’s thought on news, serving the people and the Party, they should strive to produce reports that are true, objective, accurate, and socially significant with depth.

4.2 Purifying the Internal Atmosphere of the Media Industry

The anomie of news media is not limited to rights protection reports but exists in various public opinion events in society. The causes of such phenomena are multifaceted: on the one hand, factors related to the news system and mechanism; on the other hand, some media ignore ethical principles for economic interests. The lax internal checks of a few media outlets, neglect in managing journalists and editors, and the formalization of internal mechanisms are among the major factors contributing to journalistic ethics anomie.

As disseminators of social information and watchdogs of social public opinion supervision, news media must fulfill their social responsibilities. They should deconstruct and purify the news production process from within, strengthening the professional ethics of internal staff. Moreover, with the rapid development of the Internet and 5G technology, media can use high-tech means to prevent fraud, strengthen the review of the gatekeeping process with technology, and apply blockchain technology to audit all links of news sampling and editing. This will strive to make the news production process efficient and transparent, thus purifying the internal atmosphere of the media industry.

4.3 “Era-Adaptive” Transformation of Investigative Reports

In the print media era, investigative reports were “elite writing for elite reading”, and in-depth reporting made media the “observers” and “deep explorers” of that era. However, in the era of self-media discourse, people are accustomed to fragmented reading, and lengthy in-depth investigation reports have lost their competitive edge. Coupled with policy changes, excellent in-depth reports have become even scarcer. In the past, in-depth reports from media such as Southern Weekend were once extremely popular; many major news events’ causes, inside stories, and outcomes were revealed through in-depth investigations by outstanding investigative journalists. Although investigative journalists and in-depth reporting seem to have been abandoned by the times amid changes, investigative reports can still utilize the convenience brought by technological development. Under the conditions permitted by policies, they can produce high-quality reports that clarify the truth and address people’s doubts, enabling news to truly fulfill its supervisory responsibilities.

5. Conclusion

The Gou Jing incident, as a typical case of media ethics anomie, profoundly reveals the structural dilemmas and systemic risks in the current media ecology. From the information distortion in the early stage of the incident’s fermentation, to the emotional communication in the public opinion field, and then to the collective silence of authoritative media, this series of phenomena not only reflects the collapse of professional norms in some media organizations but also exposes the deep-seated crisis in the public discourse space in the new media era. When facts give way to emotions, rationality succumbs to traffic, and responsibility is defeated by interests, the legitimacy of the media as a social public instrument is jeopardized, and the resulting trust crisis will directly threaten social stability and progress.

Facing this severe challenge, reconstructing media ethics has become an urgent proposition of the times. Media organizations must re-anchor their value coordinates and find a balance between commercial interests and social responsibilities. News reports should not be appendage to traffic, but should adhere to the principle of “facts first”. By establishing multi-level verification mechanisms and improving internal review processes, they can ensure the authenticity and fairness of the disseminated content. Secondly, journalists need to regain professional reverence and internalize Marxist views on journalism as the compass for professional practice. In an information-overloaded communication environment, the core value of journalists lies not in the speed of breaking news, but in the depth of exploring the truth and the accuracy of presenting facts. Finally, the entire industry should actively explore new reporting models empowered by technology, using tools such as blockchain and big data to build a transparent and credible content production chain, so that investigative reports can be revitalized in the “era-adaptive” transformation.

For the public, this incident also provides important cognitive enlightenment. In the post-truth era where emotions are easily manipulated, cultivating media literacy and critical thinking is crucial. The audience should learn to identify emotional traps in information, maintain reasonable doubts about one-sided narratives, and form independent judgments through multi-channel verification. Only when the public transforms from passive recipients to active participants in rational dialogue can they effectively check the anomie behavior of the media and promote the public opinion field to return to a healthy track.

The Gou Jing incident clearly presents the chain reaction that media ethics anomie may trigger — from the damage to individual rights and interests to the collapse of social trust, from the disorder of the public opinion field to the reduction of governance efficiency. To break this vicious cycle, it is necessary to build a comprehensive governance system integrating media self-discipline, public supervision, and institutional guarantees. Only in this way can we reshape a public discourse space that respects communication laws while adhering to value bottom lines, enabling the media to truly become promoters of social progress rather than creators of chaos. In this sense, the reflection on the Gou Jing incident should not be limited to case reviews, but

should become an important opportunity to promote the transformation and upgrading of China's media ecology, providing practical wisdom for building a clean cyberspace and a mature civil society.

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Bridging the Social Gap: The Role of the Metaverse in Alleviating Loneliness and Language Barriers Among International Students

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1. Introduction

Students studying abroad are often seen experiencing various challenges as they make their way into a new place with a new culture and geographical location. These challenges are majorly in the realms of communication and social integration. These challenges are found to be having strong impacts on the student's academic performance in complex ways (Bek, 2017). Causing a sense of lack of belonging can cause the students to be less determined with their studies and academic pursuits. Many of these students face such loneliness and isolation because of cultural differences, language barriers, and the immense pressure of building social networks in a foreign environment. Language barrier is found to be one of the detrimental causes of this stress among international students (Ali et al., 2020). The difficulty in understanding a foreign language, and therefore the inability to share one's thoughts can certainly result in a lack of confidence, increased stress, and further added pressure to maintain academic efficiency. Research has shown that social disconnection does have impacts on mental health and academic performance. Therefore, bridging this gap is a critical need for universities and policymakers. Solutions like support systems and orientation programs offered by universities have been helpful traditionally, but the current need is for digital solutions that are emerging in today's time. With the advancement in technological innovation, social media, and digital platforms, the world has actually become a global village (Safdar, 2021). Social media have captured all lives today and have connected them through the internet, bringing lives closer than ever before.

One of the primary digital solutions therefore in today's time can be that of metaverse. Metaverse is a concept that is emerging into the digital space. It can be considered as a next-generation internet where an immersive and dynamic virtual environment is created, allowing people to engage in their work, academics, social interactions, and entertainment (Wang et al., 2022). Metaverse equips its users with the ability to attend events virtually and collaborate with a distant colleague or friends. It does so without the constraints of being physically close. Since universities and educational institutions are also wheeling their way towards leveraging virtual platforms for education, the metaverse holds immense potential to help bridge the social gap and overcome the challenges associated with linguistics for international students. However, there exists a gap in the research field for finding the effectiveness of metaverse technologies in their ability to alleviate loneliness and language barriers. His study explored the role of the metaverse in helping international students reduce their social isolation and assist them with enhancing language learning. This research takes a quantitative approach and surveys the responses from international students and analyses their experiences and loneliness along with aspects like language barriers and their adoption of metaverse technologies. By understanding these interactions the results offer insights for students, universities, and policymakers to make better solutions for the international student community. The further sections of the paper consist of a literature review which consists of prior research on social and language challenges that international students face. The methodology explains the approach of the study, and the results showcase the findings along with discussion and a conclusion with final insights.

2. Literature Review

The challenges faced by international students need to be understood based on the historical context and the existing research. Further, the potential solutions, including digital solutions need to be analyzed to find gaps in the current repository of research. Social and linguistic barriers, specifically for international students are also explored, along with the role of digital technologies that can help in creating an inclusive environment.

2.1 *International Students and Social Challenges*

International students, i.e. the students who have migrated to a different country for educational purposes often face challenges of language and culture and struggle for social integration. This challenge can lead to the feeling of loneliness and isolation in the students. There have been studies from various parts of the world, including universities from major countries where such challenges and cases of loneliness have been found. International students experience loneliness which is higher as compared to domestic students (Neto, 2021). The primary factors that contribute to this problem are financial issues and perceived discrimination. Studies show that those students having a weaker connections to home and their host culture report the highest amount of loneliness. Further, other studies based on international students in Australia showed that accommodation conditions also contribute to the feeling of loneliness (Mitchell et al., 2022). The social composition of people staying with or around the students also contributed to this challenge. Another mixed-methods study on international students in the UK also showed that the sense of loneliness is a pressing issue among students. According to this study, three out of four students experience some level of loneliness (Wawera & McCamley, 2020). It also shows that greater use of the support services provided by the university helped students lower their loneliness levels. This was also aided by the expansion of social networks by the students. This shows that universities do have a significant amount of responsibility in assisting international students with their concerns and ensuring they are settled promptly.

Another study conducted on international Chinese students in Germany also found that the social structures and the level of interactions were responsible for shaping loneliness (Bilecen et al., 2024). The international students showed a higher level of loneliness as compared to the local students here as well. This study however also noted that merely having emotionally supportive ties was not entirely enough to alleviate loneliness and in fact were rather related to higher levels of loneliness. This was associated with the possible emotional burden of providing support to the dependents. Overall, the language barrier is a significant obstacle for the students that makes them averse to making social connections and therefore keeps them feeling lonely.

2.2 *Digital Solutions for Social and Educational Inclusion*

With the growing advancements in technology and other communication forms, the loneliness problem has been solved with various devices, applications, and other online platforms. There have been studies on the effectiveness of phone applications that can reduce loneliness. It was observed that students with higher baseline depression found this technological solution to be helpful (Bruehlman-Senecal et al., 2020). It showed promising evidence that technologically sound interventions can have a strong impact and can play a key role in mitigating loneliness. However, other studies suggest that the impact of such digital interactions and interventions has an effect that is dependent on the way individuals engage themselves with these technologies (Nowland et al., 2017). If the students use these technologies to build newer connections and also remain connected to the existing relationships then they can be helpful in reducing loneliness. However, if these are used to just escape from the physical social interactions then these can further build up loneliness. Further, one of the crucial aspects of the metaverse, virtual reality (VR) can also be used as a tool for helping international students in their language learning. VR technologies show huge potential for a second language learning platform, helping students learn a new language (Legault et al., 2019). This can further be used to ease them with their social anxiety and loneliness. This way the metaverse provides newer dimensions of virtual engagement and allows students to interact in a more immersive environment. Since the technologies are advanced, they do not require mandatory human intervention, therefore easing students in making connections online.

The role of metaverse in language education is an emerging phenomenon. While this field remains largely unexplored, limited studies show positive attitudes and improved learning outcomes through various metaverse platforms (Fan & Chiang, 2023). The majority of the research is focused on students in South Korea and China by using a quantitative and mixed-method approach. These conclude that the challenges still persist and the metaverse alone is not a standalone solution for the learning of the languages. Another study done in the context of Chinese medical universities focused on the role of the metaverse in shaping the mental health of international students. Cross-cultural dialogues in virtual environments have been found to show a positive influence on the well-being of the students (Li, 2022). These understandings from the study show that digital platforms have immense potential in facilitating cultural exchange, and therefore support the mental health of students. Another study suggested that the use of a 3D virtual environment facilitates meaningful interaction and promotes cross-cultural exchange thereby helping students ease (Shafiq, 2024). However, these research and studies are

very limited and do not provide a full picture of the real-world challenges that international students face. Therefore, future research is required to add to the current understanding.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

There are some theoretical frameworks that can help in understanding the problems and concerns of international students and their loneliness while studying in a foreign country. A prominent theory called the Social Presence Theory talks about the feeling that is conveyed by different media which varies based on the media in use. A study showed that strong correlation between social presence through the use of various platforms with sociability and social spaces (Wempe & Collins, 2024). Another study that was conducted for a year on 126 graduates showed that the perceived social support from domestic students and faculty members showed a decline in the loneliness of international students. Additionally, the faculty support also improved the psychological well-being of the students, showcasing the critical role of domestic students and faculty in supporting the social-emotional adjustments of international students (Brunsting et al., 2019). Overall, meaningful interactions in social or virtual environments can help students with their loneliness. Learning language, using metaverse and its platforms efficiently, and taking positive steps towards socializing can help students perform well in their international curriculum while ensuring they are not lonely there. Existing literature shows social and linguistic challenges in international students and how digital technologies help in addressing them. Metaverse has a promising presence in today's time in solving this issue. However, there exists a gap in studies focusing on the metaverse and connecting it with its potential to solve student's loneliness in an international environment. Therefore, further sections of this study entail the methodology employed to conduct research and gather data to find the impacts and effects of metaverse on international students.

3. Methodology

This study explores the role of the metaverse in helping international students to deal with their loneliness and language barriers. A survey was designed to get data on students that encompass their experiences and perceptions of the metaverse in dealing with their loneliness. This section defines the research approach in detail.

3.1 Research Approach

A quantitative approach was equipped for this study. The survey-based questionnaire was prepared to be able to conduct analysis and find the relationship between the usage of the metaverse and its effect on loneliness and language barriers. The quantitative method was applied in order to gather empirical data from students to ensure that the trends and correlations can be easily identified, which is lacking in a qualitative research approach. The survey largely consisted of close-ended questions that can be framed in a Likert scale with multiple-choice questions and responses. This helped in ensuring consistency in the responses from the students. The following aspects were considered to be extracted through the questionnaire:

- Demographic factors like age, gender, and duration of study.
- Social integration and the levels of loneliness.
- Usage of online platforms for establishing social connections.
- Impacts of these virtual interactions on loneliness.
- Communication challenges based on language proficiency.
- Adoption with metaverse and familiarity with it.
- Perception of students on the role of metaverse in supporting social and educational needs.
- Challenges and potential improvements for this adoption.

The Likert scale being considered in this questionnaire was a five-point Likert scale to understand the experiences and attitudes of students.

3.2 Data Collection and Sample

The survey designed to get insights from students was administered via the SoJump platform, an online survey platform that allows for efficient data collection. A total of 109 responses were received from the students. The data was anonymized and it was also ensured to not include any questions that would make the tracking of respondents possible.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for the collected data was conducted including descriptive and statistical methods. The following analysis was conducted on the data:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** This included frequencies and percentages of the students providing various responses about loneliness and language barriers.

- **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson's correlation method was used to find the relationship between metaverse usage, perceived language improvement, and loneliness.
- **Visualization:** Graphs and tables are also included to show the spread of the data and show various relationships in a visual medium.

4. Results and Analysis

This section provides the results of the analysis performed on the data collected. It is divided into sub-sections focusing on the relationship between loneliness and the metaverse, language barriers and communication in the metaverse along with the usage and adoption patterns of the metaverse and the limitations of this integration.

4.1 Exploratory Analysis

Figure 1 below shows the distribution of the age group of the respondents. It can be seen that the majority of the age group is between 31-35 years with a moderate amount of respondents belonging to the 18-24 age bracket. This shows a diverse range of participants, which in turn provides a wholesome result based on the experiences of various age groups of the students. These students at some point have been studying in a foreign country as international students and therefore can provide insights that are based on experience and anecdotal evidence.

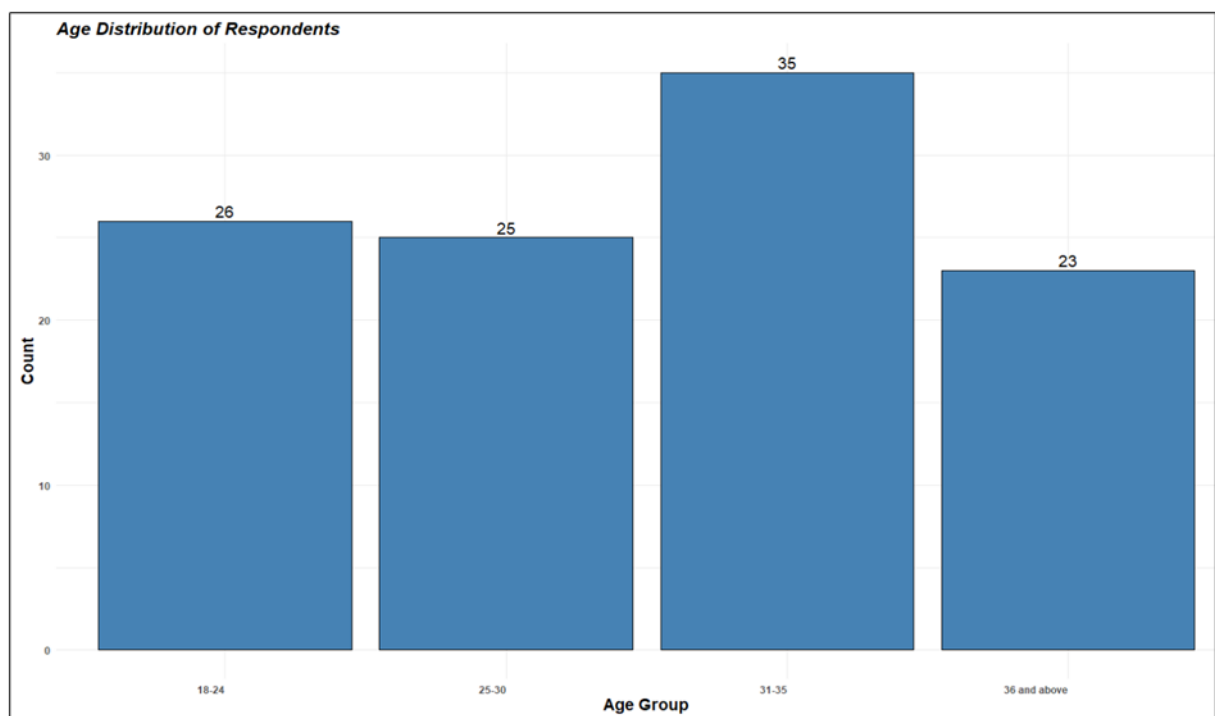


Figure 1. Distribution of age of the respondents

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the levels of loneliness among the participants. It is interesting to note that the majority of the students rated their level of loneliness to be a level of 4. The levels were marked as 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often) and 5 (Always).

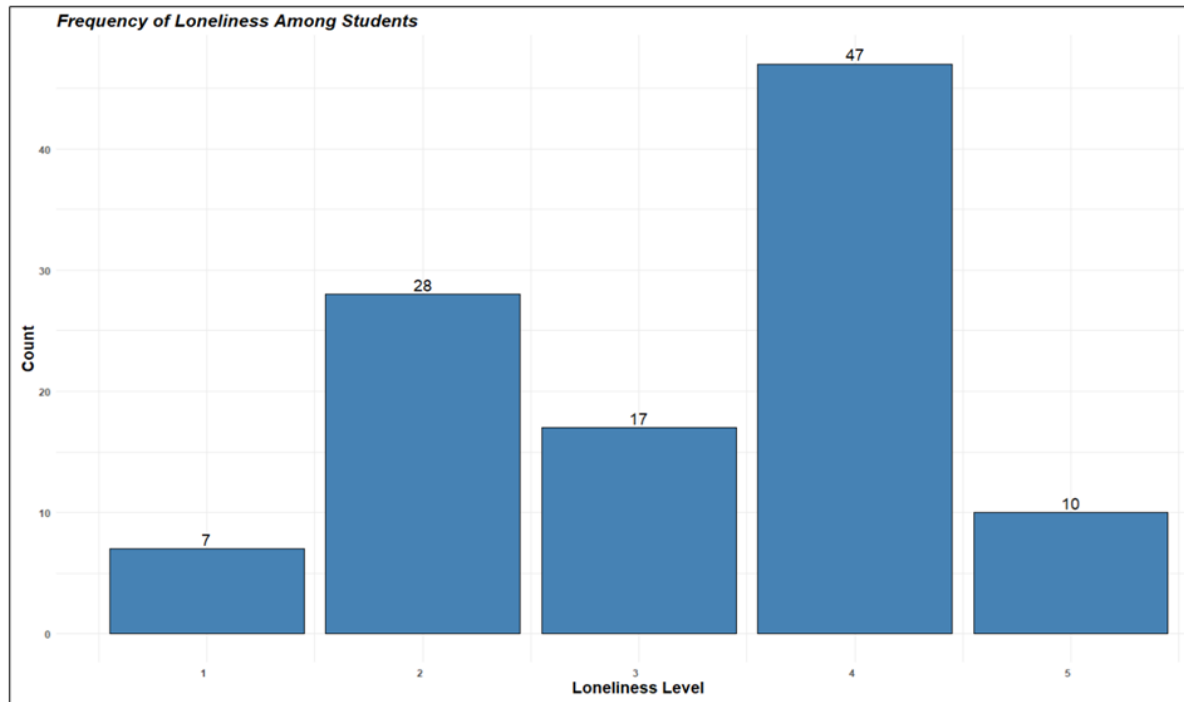


Figure 2. Frequency of the levels of loneliness among students

The results show that the majority of international students have experienced loneliness often at some point in their education. This number is followed by the *Rarely* category, followed by *Sometimes* and *Always*. The least number of participants responded with *Never* as an option for their loneliness.

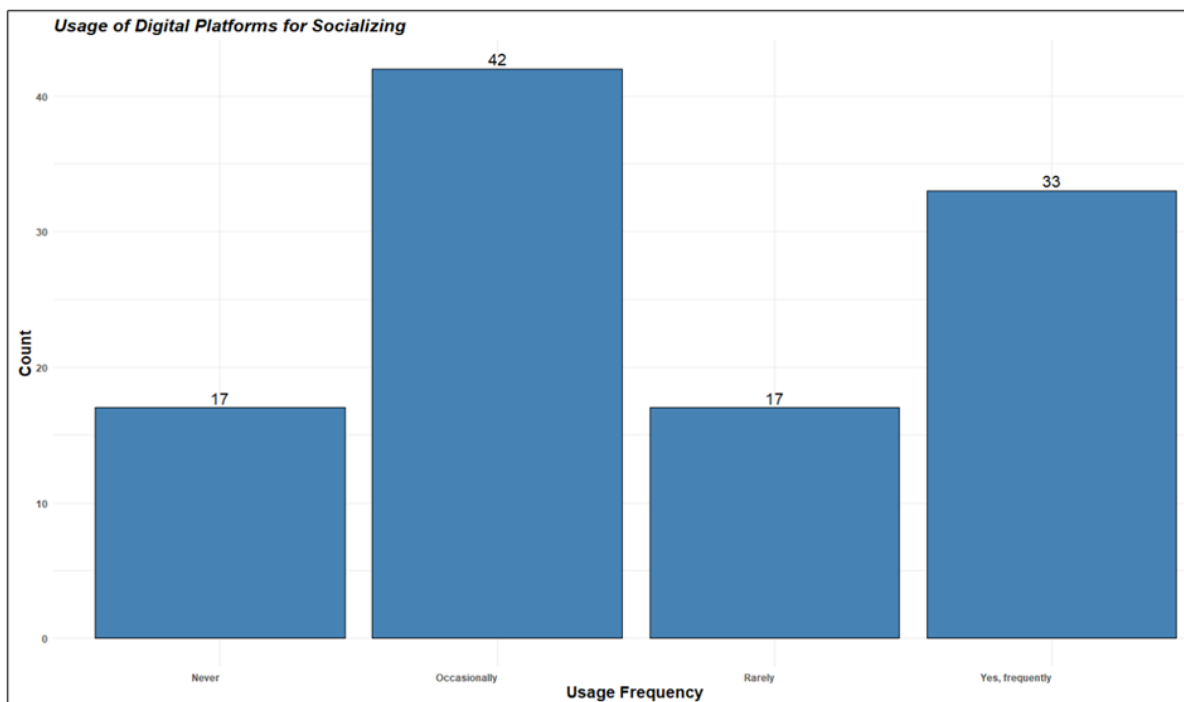


Figure 3. Frequency of usage of digital platforms for socializing

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the respondents based on their usage of digital platforms for the purpose of socializing. It can be noted that the majority of the respondents occasionally use social media and digital

platforms to interact and socialize. This number is followed by the respondents who use the platforms very frequently. The least number of respondents responded with rarely and never.

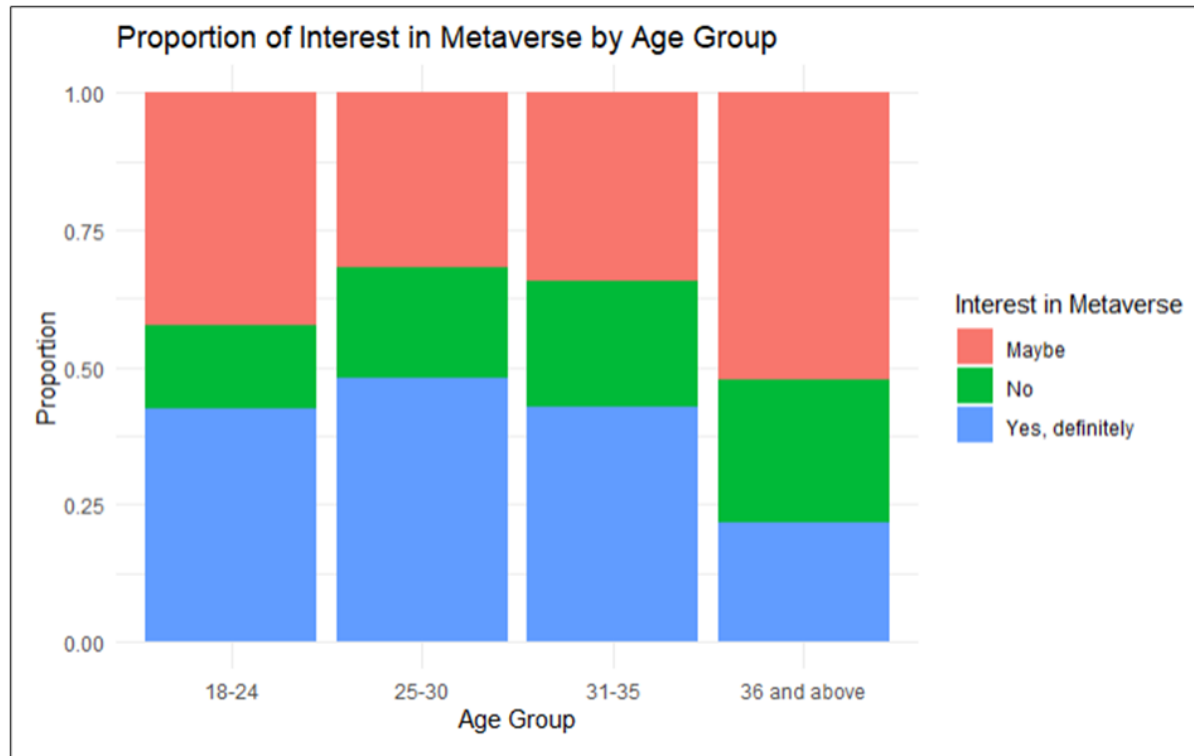


Figure 4. Interest in metaverse by various age groups

Further, Figure 4 shows the interest distribution of the respondents in metaverse technologies including AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) as tools of the metaverse. It can be noted that the young population of the respondents was found to be interested in the metaverse technologies majorly. The age group of 25-30 has the maximum number of respondents showing interest in the metaverse, while the age group of 36 and above shows the least interest. A very few proportion of the age groups of the students have respondents with no interest in metaverse technologies. While this might not reflect on the current effects and usage of these technologies, but definitely shows a potential for a rise in the use of metaverse technologies in the future, since most of the students are interested in this technology.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of students having some sort of familiarity with the metaverse. It can be noted that about 42.4% of the respondents show somewhat familiarity with the metaverse, while about 25.8% of the respondents show extensive familiarity with the metaverse. Only 8.3% of the respondents do not have any reference or familiarity with metaverse, showing its growing reach among students.

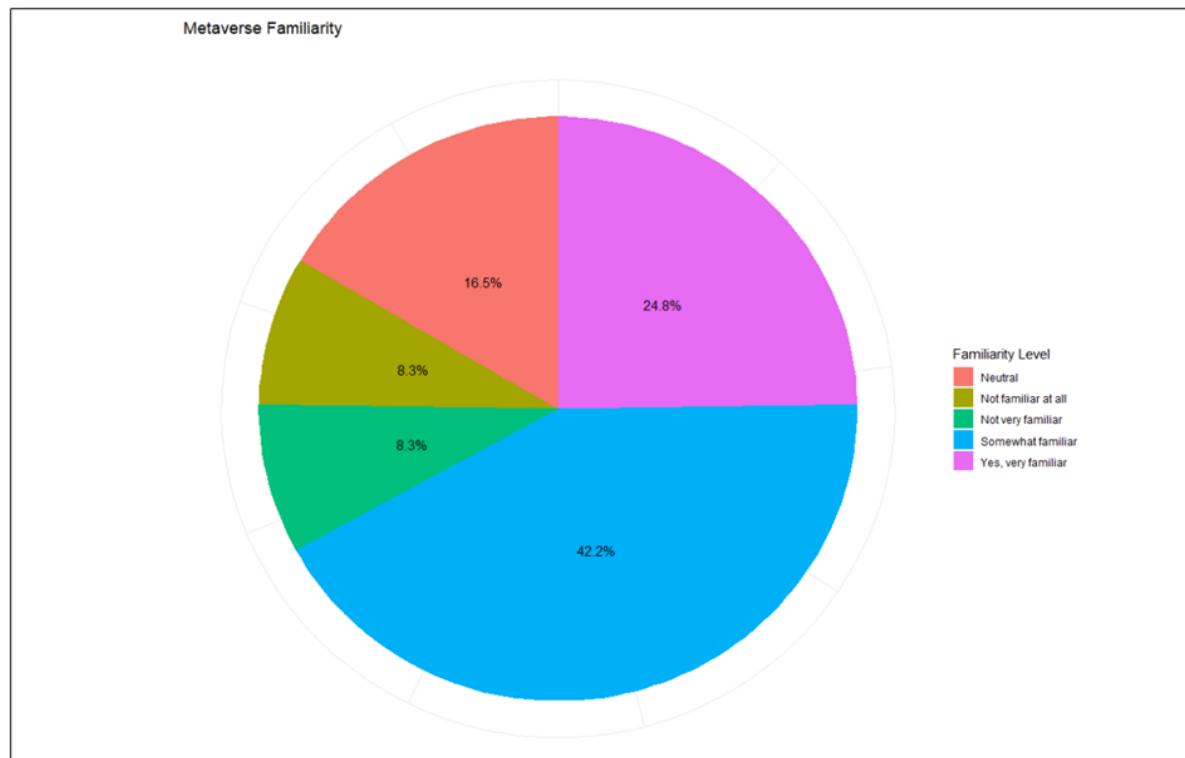


Figure 5. Familiarity with the metaverse

4.2 The Relationship Between Loneliness and the Metaverse

The primary findings from the analysis suggest that metaverse alone does not significantly show a pattern of decreasing or alleviating the loneliness factor among international students. The results obtained from regression conducted on the data show that the use of the metaverse and the help extended by it in solving loneliness have a weak association with self-reported levels of loneliness. This showcases that while digital interactions may build some kind of connection and confidence among students, it is not entirely responsible for solving the problem of loneliness among international students. This result can be seen represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Coefficients of the variables

Variable	Estimate	p-value
Loneliness (Never)	-1.1910	0.2059
Loneliness (Often)	-0.3463	0.7383
Loneliness (Rarely)	-1.2369	0.1740
Loneliness (Sometimes)	-1.3769	0.2188
English Proficiency (Native-like)	1.9928	0.0209

It shows that the loneliness is not alleviated by the use of metaverse as much as expected. Therefore, the use of metaverse can be an assistive method, along with other interventions to solve the problems of loneliness.

4.3 Language Barriers and Communication in the Metaverse

While the use of metaverse and its technologies can be enticing in terms of enhancing communication among students, the findings suggest that there are mixed effects of metaverse in terms of helping with language barriers and communication. This aspect showed a mix of results where the majority of the students showed a perceived benefit of metaverse in helping with their communication and language learning, others did not conform with this to the same extent. Figure 6 shows these results in the form of a bar graph.

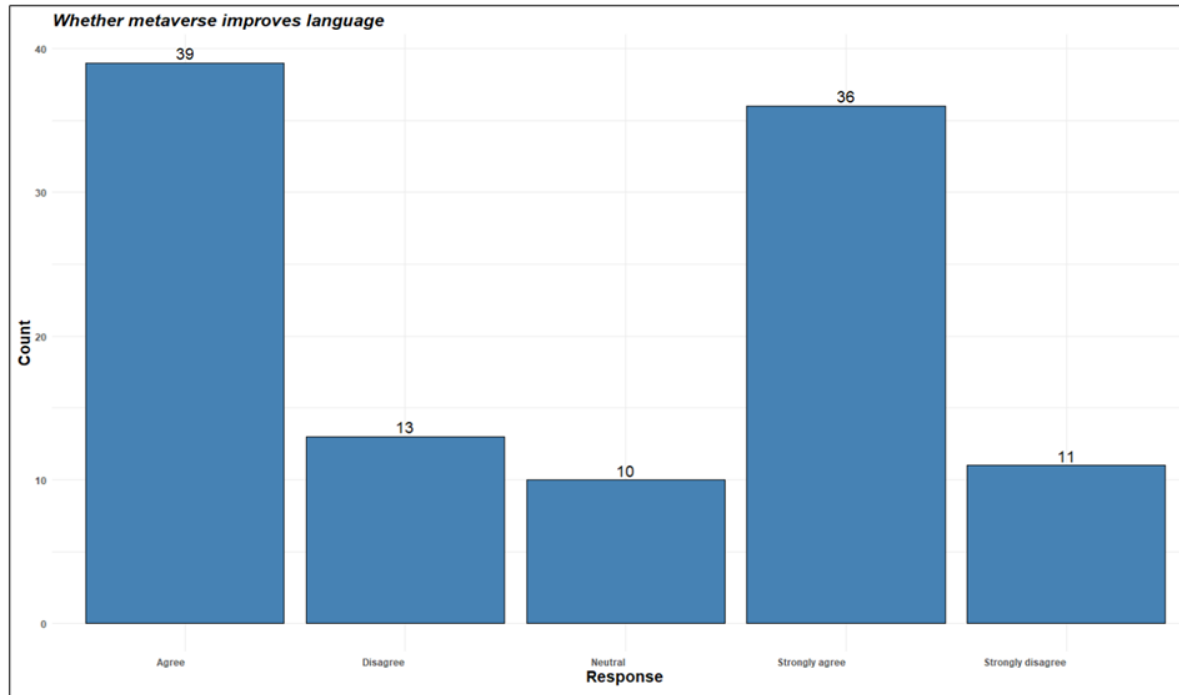


Figure 6. Frequency of perception of language improvement by Metaverse

Further, Figure 7 shows the suggestions provided by the students regarding the use of metaverse and how they can be made more relevant for them. The majority of the students think that using metaverse in the form of a cultural exchange activity would make it the most useful for international students in dealing with their loneliness. Trailing behind a substantial decrease in frequency is language barrier support and academic collaboration along with virtual social events. Therefore, students believe that cultural exchange events are something that needs to be conducted to help them meet and interact with other fellow students in a more open and interactive manner.

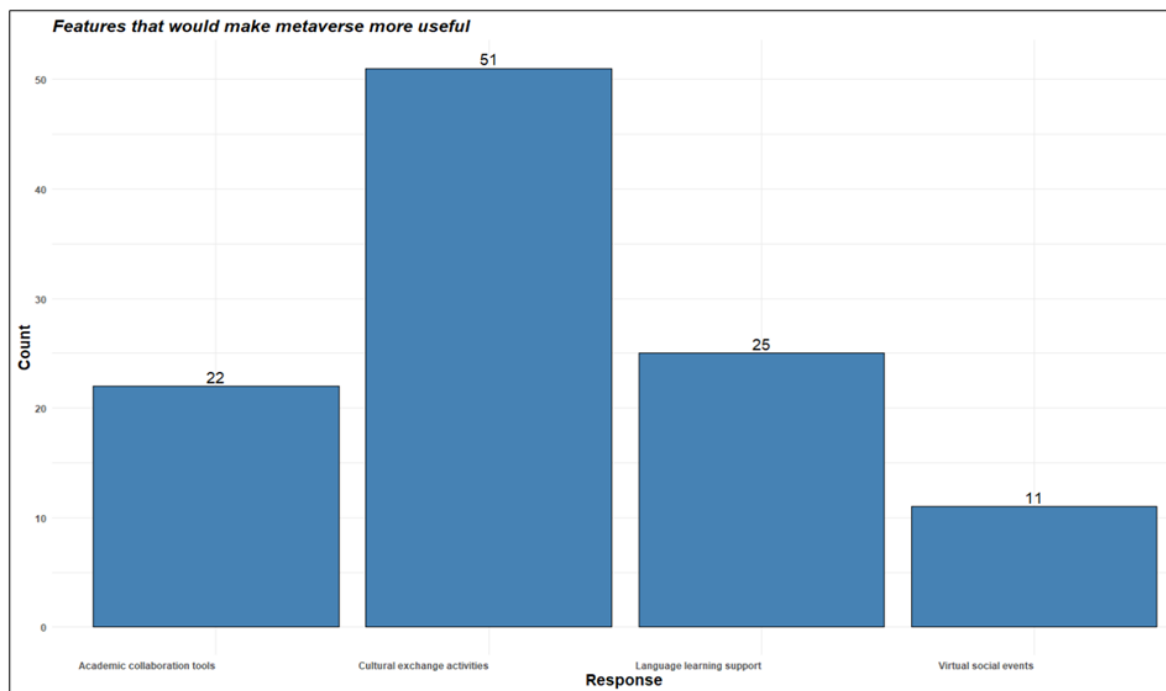


Figure 7. Features suggested by students that can make Metaverse more useful

5. Discussion

5.1 Key Findings

Several key findings have been identified in this study. The following is a summative list of the valuable insights found through this study:

- There is a limited impact of metaverse on the mitigation of loneliness from international students. This result is backed by the regression analysis conducted where it was identified that there is no significant effect of metaverse knowledge and adoption in alleviating loneliness.
- The use of metaverse has a mixed effect on the language barriers and the communication aspect. While the availability of software, platforms, and AR-VR tools can help students with language learning, the technical limitations and cultural nuances still can persist in some challenges.
- Younger students have more interest in metaverse technologies as compared to older students.
- International students prefer cultural exchange activities over any other form of utility for metaverse for considering it useful in dealing with their loneliness problems.

Despite the immense potential, the use of metaverse, especially in international students needs to be more integrated with the curriculum for the students to adopt them further and utilize them to deal with their loneliness.

5.2 Comparison with Existing Literature

The findings from this study show a strong linkage with the currently available research. This shows consistency in the aspects of the use of digital platforms and their interaction with loneliness and language learning for international students.

- While the metaverse can assist in forming digital connections and attending events online and assisting in collaborations, it cannot entirely take away the loneliness factor in international students.
- Language learning does show some improvement through the use of the metaverse. It is also noted that the familiarity and accessibility of this technology are highly related to the adoption of these technologies, as seen by the interest among younger participants and their adoption proportion.

5.3 Implications for International Students and Universities

The implications of this study and its findings are vast and affect all the stakeholders including students, universities, and policy makers. The implications for the students are:

- Metaverse can be used as a supplementary tool for enhancing their social interactions and language learning but it cannot be relied on entirely for addressing the loneliness issue of international students.
- Engagement in the real world can be more beneficial than relying on digital means. Actual participation along with the assistance of metaverse technologies together can be the best solution to mitigate loneliness.
- Awareness of the limitations of these technologies shall empower students to look for other potential alternatives and solutions to alleviate their loneliness.

Implications for the universities and the support systems are:

- Relying solely on metaverse to be effective in helping students accommodate the new environment is not a solution. A hybrid approach of combining counseling, and orientation programs and integrating them with metaverse is a more suitable plan for helping international students adapt quickly to the new environment and support them with their loneliness.
- Using cultural exchange programs in tandem with the metaverse technologies has been provided as a suggestion from the students. Therefore, universities should not limit the use of digital services just for conveying academics and social events but should integrate them into cultural exchange programs.

Overall, the findings suggest that while metaverse is not entirely a solution for international student's loneliness in a foreign country, it can definitely assist in alleviating it if used correctly.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the roles of the metaverse in alleviating and addressing the issues of loneliness and language barriers in international students. The research took a quantitative approach and performed analysis on the data collected from international students. The findings from the data analysis along with the knowledge gathered from the previous research as explored through the literature review suggest that the metaverse has potential for enhancing digital engagements. However, the study also concludes that the metaverse alone cannot be a one-stop solution for dealing with the loneliness of international students. Instead, it

can be taken as a supplementary force along with other solutions like physical participation, efforts from universities, and language learning to overcome loneliness. In terms of language barriers, the use of metaverse has the potential to serve as a language-learning aid where the use of AR and VR technologies can come in handy. Further, it was also noted that younger students are more interested in metaverse and therefore the general adoption rate needs to be equalized by considering easing out of technical advancements. Universities should adopt the metaverse as a hybrid approach in providing international students with options and support in their journey of dealing with loneliness. As suggested by the students in the survey, the use of metaverse in cultural exchange programs is the most desired way of integrating it into the curriculum. This study contributes to the ongoing field of research about the effects, needs, and impact of metaverse in alleviating language barriers and loneliness in international students. Future study can be further extended by considering aspects like accessibility, inclusivity, and the integration of metaverse along with artificial intelligence directly into academic and social settings.

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An X-Ray of the Implementation of Separation of Powers Within the Cameroon Political Regime

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Abstract

Theoretically, the 1996 Constitution of Cameroon formally establishes a tripartite system of governance dividing powers among the executive, legislature and judiciary. However, the actual configuration of power reveals a dominance of the executive, a docile legislature, and a politicized judiciary. The central question addressed is to what extent does the Separation of Powers, as enshrined in Cameroon's constitutional framework, reflect the reality of governance and institutional practice? With an objective to evaluate the operational independence and functional integrity of state institutions vis-à-vis their constitutional mandates and to highlight the structural and political barriers hindering effective Separation of Powers. Anchored on the theoretical lens of Constitutionalism and checks and balances, the paper draws from scholarly literature, legal texts and contemporary political events to provide a grounded analysis of Cameroon's regime dynamics. The study reveals executive dominance, legislature subordination and judicial suppression. This analysis is given timely given Cameroon's democratic backsliding and institutional stagnation. It contributes to debates on governance reform by making recommendations.

Keywords: Separation of Powers, Cameroon constitution, political regime

1. Introduction

The theory of Separation of Powers stands as a cornerstone of modern constitutional democracies, rooted in the need to prevent the concentration of power and ensure institutional checks and balances. It refers to the division of government authority among the legislative, executive and judicial branches, such that no single branch encroaches upon the competencies of another. It ensures that power is not monopolized by one entity, thereby protecting liberty and promoting accountable governance. The classical definition traces back to Baron de Montesquieu, who in his book articulated the idea that "there can be no liberty where the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person or body of magistrates."¹ This enlightenment perspective heavily influenced the constitutions of liberal democracies and has been enshrined in numerous constitutional texts across the globe such as the US constitution (1787), the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic (1958), the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).

The doctrine is also elaborated by authors like Fombad, who considers the Separation of Powers under African constitutionalism not just as a distribution of functions, but a deliberate constitutional mechanism to prevent tyranny and enhance accountability through institutional independence and inter-branch checks.² This understanding adds a normative dimension to the concept: separation is not only structural but instrumental in sustaining constitutional order. Therefore, for the purpose of this article, the Separation of Powers is considered

¹ Montesquieu, (1748). "The Spirit of the Laws".

² Fombad, (2019). *Separation of Powers in African Constitutionalism*. Oxford University Press, 78.

in the structural aspect which divides the arms of government into the executive, legislative and judiciary and the functional aspect which is separate their functions through mutual independence, checks and cooperation among branches.

This article seeks to analyze how the theory of Separation of Powers is implemented in Cameroon's current political regime, by assessing the consistency or lapses between constitutional norms and political practices. It seeks to reveal the tensions between constitutional design and authoritarian tendencies embedded in long-term incumbency, presidential overreach and weak institutional independence. The use of the Cameroonian system on the other hand is as a result of its centralized presidential regime, where the president is both the Head of State and Head of government, vested with expansive powers under the 1996 Constitution.¹ The current President has been in office since 1982, making him one of the longest-serving heads of state in the world. This long-term incumbency, coupled with amendments to remove term limits (like in the amended constitution of 2008), highlights the entrenchment of executive dominance.²

Also, Cameroon has experienced increasing constitutional tensions, especially in its failure to effectively implement decentralization, judicial independence and parliamentary oversight.³ These tensions are exacerbated by systematic suppression of dissent, politicization of state institutions and limited separation between ruling party interests and government machinery. Therefore, by conducting a critical X-ray of Cameroon's implementation of the Separation of Powers, this article will demonstrate how constitutional doctrines can be subverted by political structures and will question the functional legitimacy of formal democratic arrangements under authoritarian presidencies.

2. Theoretical and Legal Framework of Separation of Powers in the Cameroonian System

The Separation of Powers as developed by Montesquieu, advocates for a political arrangement where the legislative, executive and judiciary function independently. Montesquieu proposed that liberty is endangered when these powers are concentrated in one institution or individual, by stating that "when the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person... there can be no liberty."⁴ This theory was primarily designed as a safeguard against absolutism and the abuse of authority. A concept particularly relevant to postcolonial African States grappling with legacies of centralized rule. However, in the African context, the doctrine has evolved to reflect contextual peculiarities. Fombad offers an accurate framework suitable for analyzing systems like Cameroon's. He considers Separation of Powers as not only the division of government functions but also as an accountability mechanism. It is meant to enhance governance through autonomy of institutions, checks and balances and legal boundaries for each branch of government. In the African context the principle must include the functional ability of branches to oversee one another, not merely their structural division.⁵

In Cameroon, the Separation of Powers is given formal recognition through various constitutional, statutory and regulatory instruments. The foremost of these is the Constitution of 18th January 1996 as amended, which serves as the Supreme and legal authority. It articulates the distinct existence of the three branches of government and provides for their respective jurisdictions. Also, the Standing Orders of the National Assembly and Senate, contains internal legislative instruments that govern the organization, procedure and oversight functions of parliament. They enable the legislature to carry out its law-making and supervisory responsibilities and are crucial for maintaining its institutional autonomy.

Moreso, certain organic laws have been established relating to the structure and functioning of state institutions and they include the Constitutional council, the Judiciary and decentralized mechanisms which serve to clarify the constitutional provisions relating to institutional separation and interaction. Amongst others the various laws regulating certain bodies of government, also aid to reiterate of the separation of powers and they include: the law on the organization and functioning of the Higher Judicial Council, (its regulates the body responsible for judicial appointments, promotions and discipline. Its central feature defines the autonomy and integrity of the judiciary), the Electoral Code (it outlines the legal procedures for the election of members of legislative bodies and other elected officials. It affects the balance of power among the branches by determining the composition and representativeness of the Legislature and local authorities). Indirectly, the decentralization law especially law no. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019, indirectly contributes to the dispersion of executive authority through

¹ Cameroon's Constitution of 1996, Law No. 96-6 of 18th January 1996 to amend the constitution of 2 June, 1972 article 8 and 9.

² Fombad, (2004). Cameroon's emergency Powers: A Recipe for (Un)constitutional Dictatorship? *Journal of African Law*, 48, 165 and 189.

³ Chia N.C., Satumin K.T.N, and Nkeneh Y.C., (2020). The Cameroon Decentralization Project: Tool of Conflict Resolution or Seed of Discrepancies in the Governance of a Heterogeneous State. *EAS Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 110.

⁴ Montesquieu, (1748). *The Spirit of the Laws* op.cit Pg. 14.

⁵ Fombad 1 op.cit pg. 82.

the establishment of elected regional and local bodies, reinforcing the principles of accountability and horizontal distribution of powers. Also, the Law regulating the Constitutional Council tasks the council with constitutional adjudication and electoral dispute resolution. Thus together, these instruments constitute the theoretical and legal framework of the Separation of Powers in Cameroon.

Constitution of Cameroon

The 1996 Constitution of Cameroon, which revised the 1972 unitary constitution, is the foundational legal text that outlines the doctrine of Separation of Powers. It devolves power into three branches which are the executive, legislative and judiciary. The executive is headed by the President of the Republic, pursuant to section 8 and 9.¹

The Legislature comprises of a bicameral parliament which consists of the National Assembly and the Senate. Its powers are elaborated in section 15 to section 24, while the powers of the judiciary are elaborated from sections 37 to 42. Nevertheless, these arms of government do not function in isolation as they share powers which is also elaborated in article 26 of the constitution amongst others.

2.1 The Legislature

The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon in its part 3 provides for the Legislative autonomy. It recognizes the legislative as an independent organ in its section 14(1), "Legislative power shall be exercised by the Parliament which shall comprise of two houses: the National Assembly and the Senate". This indicates that the Legislative power which makes laws, rest in the hands of Parliamentarians. Equally, according to section 4 of the Cameroon Constitution, State power is exercised by the President of the Republic and the Parliament meaning the Parliament acts independently in Carrying out state affairs.²

Despite the provision of section 2(1) of the Constitution which states that "National sovereignty shall be vested in the people of Cameroon who shall exercise either through the President of the Republic and members of Parliament or by way of Referendum. No section of the people or any individual shall arrogate to itself or himself the exercise thereof" the Parliament of Cameroon acts with consideration of national interest and not for the people, thus each member of the National Assembly represents the entire Nation and therefore protects the interest of the Nation at all times. This is backed by section 15(3) of the Constitution which states that "any imposed mandate shall be null and void".³ Thus, this section guarantees the independence of the legislative from the people and the executive.

Also, the legislative arm in Cameroon is governed by working manual which provides them with rules and regulations which prevents them from the control of the government; this is the Standing Order of parliament and is regulated by Law no. 73/1 of June, 1973 as amended by Law No. 2014/016 of 9th September 2014.⁴ The Constitutional council is responsible for disputes with Parliamentary election and the actions of the Parliament such that they have no influence from the executive in performing their duties which guarantees them their independence from the other arms of government. This could be seen where the Constitutional Council declared the Standing Orders of 2002 on the validation of Parliamentary mandates unconstitutional. Through this action, it shows that the Parliament are operating on a governing manual reserved for them without external influence from the other arms of government.

The parliament has the power to indict the President, and this is the strongest power Parliament has over the Head of State according to the Constitution, article 53(2) new where the Parliament acts as a State Counsel. Equally, according to article 43 treaties which fall within the jurisdiction of the Parliament are submitted to it for authorization to ratify. This means that the President has no constitutional right to ratify without authorization from the parliament, treaties and international agreements which fall within the competence of the Parliament.⁵

Parliament manages their own finances from the adoption of the budget to the control of the budget. This management is ensured by the President of each Chamber who is also the budgetary officer with the secretary general as the authorizing officer. The Quaestors are responsible for ensuring the preparation and control of Parliaments finances by preparing the draft budget and submitting it for consideration and vote by the finance committee. The Parliament has its own accounting officer appointed by order of the bureau who also makes payment of the expenses of the National Assembly and provides the necessary documents for the exercise of their control.

¹ Cameroon's constitution of 1996 sections 8 and 9 elaborate on the powers of the President of the Republic.

² Law no. 96/6 of 18th January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2nd June 1972, section 14.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Law no. 2014/016 of 9th September 2014 on the Standing Orders of Parliament.

⁵ Law no. 2008-001 of 14th April 2008 amending and supplementing some provisions of the 1972 and 1996 Constitution.

Moreso, Parliamentarians enjoy immunity which enables them to express themselves without fear of prosecution and protection from external influence. Thus the immunity of Parliamentarians is established by Ordinance No. 72/12 of 26th August 1972 and section 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Senate which distinguishes irresponsibility from inviolability.¹ Thus, section 1 of the above Ordinance no. 72/12 provides that no member of the National Assembly may be prosecuted, sought, detained or judged on the occasion of the opinions or votes cast by him in the performance of his duties. This irresponsibility covers all prosecutions whether criminal or civil, it takes into account all the acts carried out within the framework of the exercise of the mandate such as votes, deliberations, debates, reports. This irresponsibility is permanent because it continues even if the Assembly does not sit and continues after the end of the mandate but does not cover personal activities.²

According to this, Parliamentarians are protected from criminal prosecution from which they can arbitrarily be subjected. This is to prevent the Parliamentarian taken as an individual who is subject to intimidations or unjustified arrests by the government or its supporters, section 2 of Ordinance No. 72/2 above specifies that “except in case of *flagrante delicto* or crime and offense against internal and external security of the State as they are fixed by the Penal Code, no deputy may be prosecuted in criminal or correctional matters except with the authorization of the National Assembly during the sessions or the authorization of the office out of session”. This equally shows legislative autonomy from the executive. Inviolability is, however, temporary with limited protection unlike irresponsibility. It lasts only as long as the mandate itself.³ The parliament also has the power to indict the President and this is the strongest power Parliament has over the Head of State according to the Constitution article 53(2) new where the Parliament acts as a State Counsel. Equally, according to article 43 treaties which fall within the jurisdiction of the Parliament are submitted to it for authorization to ratify. This means that the President has no constitutional right to ratify without authorization from the parliament, treaties and international agreements which fall within the competence of the Parliament.⁴

The Parliament equally reserves as right to ratify ordinance in order for them to become Laws. That is according to article 28 of the Constitution. This means that in case where parliament refuses to authorize ratification of an ordinance, the ordinance will remain of a statutory nature as long as they have not been ratified. The authorization by Parliament to Ratify can be seen in the authorization by Parliament for the President to ratify the OHADA Uniform Act through Law no. 94/4 of 4 August 1994 authorizing the President of the Republic to ratify the Treaty on the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa, signed in Port Louis, Mauritius, on 17 October 1993 and was ratified in 1996 by way of a presidential decree that is Decree no. 96/177 of 5th September 1996.⁵

The Parliament reserves the right to grant amnesty according to article 26(6) of the Constitution.⁶ Article 31(2) equally reserves the President of the National Assembly the right to enact laws after expiry of the 15 (fifteen) days limit for the enactment of a law by the President.⁷ More so, article 63 of the Constitution gives Parliament power to amend the Constitution. That is the right to amend the Constitution does not only rest with the President of the Republic but also with the members of the Parliament.

According to article 34(1) of the Constitution, the government presents its economic, financial, social and cultural program to the National Assembly. Meaning the Finance bill which is prepared by the government is meant to be defended before the Parliament and it's subject to approval by the Parliament. The Parliament can equally request that the government review the Finance budget or make certain adjustments. Equally, the fact that Ministers commit their responsibility to the Parliament, gives room for Parliament to control the conduct of cabinet members and to check abuses of office, misconduct, mismanagement, and incompetence. This is very evident through the debate of motion of no confidence and motion of censure.

Added to the above, the Parliament can question the responsibility of the government through a motion of censure. According to article 34(4) of the Constitution, a vote of no confidence is considered when the government gives request to some reformation according to article 34(2). The Prime Minister in this case commits the responsibility of the Government before the National Assembly on a program or as the case may be, on a general policy statement. And where the National Assembly adopts the motion of censure or passes the vote of no confidence, the Prime Minister is expected to immediately tender the resignation of the government to the

¹ Ordinance no. 72-12 of August 1972 establishing the system of immunities for members of the National Assembly Art. 14(6).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Law no. 2008 op.cit amending and supplementing some provisions of the 1972 and 1996 constitution.

⁵ Official Gazette of the Republic of Cameroon, 15 November 1997.

⁶ Law no 2008/001 of 14 April 2008.

⁷ *Ibid.*

President of the Republic.¹ Again article 35 of the Constitution gives the Parliament the right to control government action through oral and written questions during Plenary sessions.²

Despite, Parliaments' struggle to control the executive, it has proven futile because most of the provisions of the Constitution which empower the Parliament are contradicted by the same constitution. These contradictions have proven so far to empower the executive such that it performs most of the functions of the Legislative and even hinders the control method which is meant to be implemented.

2.2 The Executive

The executive power in Cameroon as enshrined in the Constitution is stated in Part Two of the Constitution. It consists of the powers of the President of the Republic and the Government. The executive branch is responsible for the enforcement of laws passed by the legislative branch.

The President of the Republic who is considered as the symbol of national unity is the Head of state, the guarantor of the independence of the state, and also the continuity of the State and the respect of international treaties and agreements. He defines the policy of the nation and ensure the respect for the Constitution.³

Equally, he represents the state in all acts of public life, and he ensures the internal and external security of the state, he enacts laws passed by Parliament unless he requests a second reading. He is the Head of the Armed Forces, he sets up and organizes the administrative services of the state, he exercises statutory authority, and he exercises the right to clemency (pardon) after consultation with the higher judicial council. He is responsible for conferring the decorations and honorary distinctions of the Republic. He has the power to declare a state of emergency, in case of threat to the nation's territorial integrity. He is responsible for appointing the Prime Minister.⁴ He has the right to decide when to create regional councils, their powers and he can equally dissolve the regional council according to Article 59(2) of the Cameroon Constitution when he deems fit.⁵

More so, article 53(2) of the amended 2008 Constitution states that "Acts committed by the President of the Republic in pursuance of articles 5, 8, 9 and 10 of the above law shall be covered by immunity and he shall not be accountable for them in the exercise of his functions."⁶ This means the President cannot be indicted on account of actions and decisions taken other than treason during his term of office. This makes the President to be completely immune from the prosecution for any and all criminal acts committed while in office.⁷

The Government here has to do with the Prime Minister who is considered as the Head of Government, and responsible for the enforcement of the Laws so enacted. He may delegate some of his powers to members of the government and also to senior state officials. He may propose the members of his government to be appointed by the President of the Republic.⁸

2.3 The Judiciary

The judicial power of the State of Cameroon is enshrined in the Constitution in its part 5 governed by Law no 2006/015 of 29 December 2006 on Judicial Organization in Cameroon. The Judicial Organization of the State comprises of the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, and Lower courts of Administrative litigation, lower audit Courts, Military Courts, High Courts, Courts of First Instance, and Customary law courts.

The Court of First Instance is established in every sub division, and handling matters which fall under its jurisdiction. The High Court is established in each division and handling matters which fall under its jurisdiction while the Court of Appeal is established in each Region responsible for hearing appeals of all judgments delivered in courts with the exception of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal itself.⁹ The law on judicial organization, Law no 2006/001 of 14 April 2006 governs only the Court of First Instance, the High Court and Court of appeal with the exclusion of the others.

More so, the Supreme Court is the highest court of Cameroon, just like in the Constitution, it is above the courts

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Law no 2008/001 of 14 April 2008 to amend some provisions of the Constitution of 1972 section 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Law no 2008/001 of 14th April 2008 amending and supplementing some provisions of the 1996 constitution, art 59(1).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Mbaku, (2014). Judicial Independence and Governance in Cameroon, 387.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Law no 2006/015 of 29th December 2006, section 22(a).

of Appeal, and the tribunals.¹ It is nominally independent of the executive and legislative branches of government, subject only to the oversight of the Higher Judicial Council.² It was created in 1961 to replace the Federal Court of Justice.³ It is governed by Law no. 2017/014 of 12 July 2017 to amend and supplement some provisions of Law no. 2006/016 of 29 December 2006 to lay down the organization and functioning of the Supreme Court. Equally, the law regulating Military Justice is also different from the 2006 law. Rather it is the Law no 2017/012 of 12 July 2017 to lay down the code of Military Justice in Cameroon.

The Judicial power in Cameroon is responsible for settling all court issues falling within its jurisdiction depending on the matter. This shows that the judiciary in Cameroon has its own functions which are reserved for it by the Constitution thereby indicating Separation of Power.

Added to the above, the Constitutional Council is responsible for handling matters pertaining to the Constitution. It was first created by Law no 9606 of 18th January 1996 on constitutional revision of 2nd June 1972.⁴ Section 46 of the constitution grants its competence for all matters concerning the Constitution. It is governed by law no 2004/004 of April 21 2004. It gives the final ruling on the Constitutionality of Laws, conflict of powers between state institutions, laws and treaties which are prior to enactment may also be referred to the Constitutional Council.

Again, it is responsible for ensuring the regularity of certain elections which include: the Presidential election, the legislative elections, and referendum operations.⁵ The C.C is also responsible for checking the constitutionality of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

Finally, the rulings of the Constitutional Council are not subject to appeal and are binding on the public, administrative, military, and judicial authorities as well as natural persons and corporate bodies.⁶ The Constitutional Council in Cameroon is however not a court unlike in Germany which bears the name the Constitutional Court rather in Cameroon, it is made up not only of Judges but of persons of different works of life for example Professor Joseph Owona who is an expert in Constitutional Law. Having evaluated the powers of the arms of government as enunciated by the Constitution it is worthy to analyze if this tallies with the practical aspect to better conclude on the implementation of Separation of Powers in Cameroon.

3. Institutional Reality of Separation of Powers in Cameroon

With regards the institutional reality, the Cameroon Constitution of 1996 formally adopts the doctrine of Separation of Powers by delineating the functions of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches in Articles 4, through 8. However, the implementation of this doctrine remains largely symbolic in practice. Chefor argues that “Cameroon constitutional text exhibits the structural framework of a tripartite government, but this rigidity masks a deep concentration of power within the Executive.”⁷ Also the amendment in 2008, which removed presidential term limits, further escalated executive dominance. The president’s role as Head of State, head of government, and commander of the armed forces gives him sweeping powers that undercut the equilibrium envisioned by separation of doctrines.⁸ This section examines each institution, the practical deviations from constitutional theory and provides academic evidence throughout.

3.1 Executive Dominance: The Hegemony of the Presidency

Cameroon’s executive branch has amassed disproportionate powers that dwarf the other arms of government. The President acts as Head of State, Head of government, Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces and the ultimate appointing authority for most high-level public officials.⁹ The President has the power to appoint judges, governors, university rectors, ambassadors, regional delegates, and heads of public institutions.¹⁰ According to article 5 of the Constitution, the President is the Head of State, the symbol of national unity that is

¹ Law no 2008/001 of 14 April amending some provisions of the Constitution of 1972.

² Supreme Court of Cameroon available at <https://www. July 31st 2020>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Constitutional Council available at, <https://www.prc.cm/en/cameroon/institutions/171-constitutional-council>

⁵ Law no 2008/001 of April 14th 2008 amending some sections of the 1972 Constitution.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Chefor. A.A., (2021). *A Rigid, Pure Tripartite Separation of the Organs of the Government and the Cameroonian Constitution: A Critical Appraisal. International Journal of Law*, 181.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid* section 8.

¹⁰ Yanou M.A., (2013). *Democracy in Cameroon: A Socio-Legal Appraisal. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH*, 6.

some kind of Kingly figure, he defines the policy of the nation, he ensures the respect of the Constitution, he ensures through arbitration the proper functioning of public authorities, and he is the guarantor of the independence of the State and its territorial integrity, its permanency, and the respect for international treaties and agreements. This shows that the President incarnates the Cameroonian State.¹

Although the executive arm is comprised of two bodies, that is the President and the government headed by the Prime minister, most of the executive dominance can be seen on the path of the President of the Republic. This Presidential hypertrophy confines the Prime Ministers simple *primus inter pares* (the first amongst the equal). Therefore, the Constitution gives the President of the Republic the power to reign and rule.² Thus, this Presidential supremacy at the head of the executive finds its justification in the Constitution which empowers the President of the Republic who is elected by direct universal suffrage and thus enjoys a popular legitimacy that authorizes him to implement the policy proposed to voters and validated by them.³ Key laws and policies are enacted through presidential decrees without effective parliamentary checks.⁴

Also, decentralization policy since 1996, local governance is supervised by presidential appointees.⁵ Thus, according to Yanou, “The President, in practice, wields quasi-imperial powers that dwarf the institutional independence of both Parliament and Judiciary” making the reality of Separation of Powers a fiction.

According to Fombad, the excessive powers conferred on the President effectively reduce the legislature and judiciary to mere appendages of the executive.⁶ The president can dissolve Parliament, appoint judges and rule by decree. In practice, presidential decrees are more common than Parliamentary legislation. This phenomenon is not just theoretical observed that “in a state where executive directives carry more legal and political weight than court rulings, the Separation of Powers becomes a constitutional myth.”⁷

Furthermore, Cameroon’s emergency laws allow the President to rule by decree in times of crisis. Fombad argues that these laws provide a “legal pathway for authoritarianism”, and have been invoked to suppress opposition under the pretext of national security.⁸ The executive’s capacity to bypass other institutions through legal instruments undermines democratic governance.

3.2 Parliamentary Subordination

Despite its formal constitutional role, the Parliament which comprises of the National Assembly and the Senate, the legislature still suffers high level subordination. According to section 8(12) of the Constitution, where the President finds it “necessary” after consultation with the Government, the Bureaux of the National Assembly and the Senate, he may dissolve the National Assembly.⁹ He equally has the right according to section 15(4) of the constitution, in cases of serious crises “the President after consultation with the Constitutional Council and the Bureaus of the National Assembly and Senate request the National Assembly by law, to extend or abridge its term of office”. It is on this basis that the previous legislative and municipal election of 2019 were pushed forward to March 2020. Section 8(8) of the constitution grants the President of the Republic with ‘statutory authority’ that is authority to legislate on behalf of the Parliament. And it is upon this right that the President issues out Presidential decrees and Ordinances. Section 27 of the same Constitution provides that matters not falling within the jurisdiction of the Legislature shall come within the jurisdiction of the authority empowered to do so.¹⁰ And this provisions of the Constitution empower the President as a superior to every other arm of government with possible suppression as it is the case.

Similarly, this still give him grounds to issue presidential decrees. An example of such decree is the 1976 decree pertaining to National Lands. Also Decree no 2011/2582/PM of 23rd August 2011 defining the conditions for protecting the atmosphere, Decree no 2011/2583/PM of 23rd August 2011 regulating sound and odour nuisance,

¹ Charles Manga Fombad, *Cameroon Country Report*, 14.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Anyefru E., (2011). The Refusal to Belong: Limits of the discourse on Anglophone Nationalism in Cameroon. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 297.

⁵ Bene C., et al., (2009). Democratic Decentralisation and Local Struggles.

⁶ Fombad, (2016). *Separation of Powers in African Constitutionalism*. Oxford University Press, 87.

⁷ Kamga, (2019). The Political (In)dependence of the Juidicary in Cameroon. *African Law review*, 46.

⁸ Fombad, (2004). Cameroon’s Emergency powers: A recipe for (Un) Constitutional Dictatorship? *Journal of African Law*, 13.

⁹ Law no 2008/001 of 14th April 2008 amending some sections of the 1972 Constitution of Cameroon.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Decree no 2011/2584/PM of 23rd August 2011 defining the conditions for soil and subsoil protection and also Decree no 2011/2585/PM of 23rd August 2011 establishing the list of harmful and dangerous substances and the system discharging them into inland waters.¹

Added to the above, the President can exercise his regulatory power in the field normally reserved for Parliament by way of Ordinances. Although according to section 28 of the Constitution, parliament may empower the President to legislate by way of ordinance, it is a right of Parliament which may be granted to the President.² But looking at almost all the ordinances on land tenure, it shows gross interference of the executive over the legislative power. This is because article 26(2) places certain provisions under the authority of the parliament exclusively like issues concerning Land. This could be seen in the enactment of Ordinance no74/1of 6th July 1974 on land tenure which was enacted by the President with consultation of the Parliament. This shows the Presidents interference in the powers reserved for Parliament.

Further, looking at article 53 of the Constitution which gives Parliament the power to indict the President, it looks like a bonus point to the Parliament until you read further to 53(1 and 2) where the impeachment of the President is to be done through an open ballot meaning the vote of everyone is seen and will only be passed by a four-fifth majority of members.³ This means after combining the members of the National Assembly and the Senate which gives over 280 Parliamentarians, there is meant to be at least 200 members who vote in favor of indicting the President. The indictment of the President of the Republic is to be done at the Court of Impeachment.

Equally, the Court of Impeachment which is provided for by law, is not operational in Cameroon. Section 53(4) of the Constitution which states that “the organization, composition and the conditions under which matters shall be referred to as well as the procedure applicable before the court of impeachment shall be laid down by law”, this provision has not been fulfilled till date. There is no laid down law which provides the composition, organization and conditions for matters to be referred to the Court. Thus, the Constitution creates a ghost court whose realization is far-fetched. As Chefor critiques, “Most legislative sessions are reduced to the formal endorsement of bills drafted and proposed by the executive, making Parliament a ceremonial rubber stamp.”⁴ For Instance, during the 2008 constitutional revision, the legislature approved the removal of term limits without any substantial debate, raising concerns about legislative Independence.⁵

3.3 Judicial Weakness and Executive Influence

The Judiciary’s independence is gravely undermined by executive interference. The Cameroon Constitution guarantees judicial independence in its article 37 which indicates that “judicial power shall be exercised by the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, and tribunals.”⁶ After an unequivocal statement has been made by the Constitution, it goes further to and takes away that right stating that, “the President of the Republic shall guarantee the independence of judicial power. He appoints the members of the bench and the legal department.”⁷ This is clearly stated in its article 37(3) and this makes a very strong point on a contradiction been made by the Constitution which has created weaknesses used by the executive to infringe on the independence of the judiciary by indirectly giving executive power over the judiciary.⁸ This makes the power of judicial review to rest in the hands of the executive.

The 1996 constitution introduced the concept of an independent judiciary, and it is further stipulated in the 2008 amended constitution, but the same constitution grants the President of the Republic virtually unlimited powers to appoint and dismiss judicial officers.⁹ The Constitutional council (cc), provided for in the 2008 Constitution,

¹ Republic of Cameroon summary of environmental and social impact assess, available at, https://www.afdb.org/.../Cameroon-Transport_sector_Support_Programme_Phase_2-Yaounde_Bamenda_section-Summary_ESIA-11_2015.pdf assessed on the 26th February 2024.

² *Ibid*, 14.

³ Law no 2008/001 of 14th April 2008 amending some provisions of the 1972 Constitution.

⁴ Chefor, op.cit pg.

⁵ Fombad, *Separation of Powers in African Constitutionalism*, op.cit, 16.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ The Politicization of the Cameroon Judicial system. Available at, bonaventurefon.com/.../The-Politicization-of-the-Cameroon-Judicial-System-Journal-of-Global-Justice-and-Public-Policy-Regent-University-School-of-Law-2015.pdf pg.9 8th April 2025.

⁹ Law No. 2008/001 of 14th April 2008, to amend some provisions of the Constitution op.cit.

was granted the power to determine the Constitutionality of Legislative acts.¹ But the Constitutional Council is not expected to function independently and effectively since the President of the Republic is reserved with the right to appoint members of the Constitutional Council in article 51(2) of the Constitution.

Moreover, like in many other countries, judicial officers have to take an oath before they commence service.² This oath requires judicial officers to be impartial when they render justice, they are to perform their jobs without fear, favour or malice.³ However, section 126(a) of the Cameroon Penal Code sanctions in a rather vague way, “the representative of the executive authority” who issues any order or prohibition of any court.⁴ Meaning that there is no definitive punishment to be meted on an executive member who violates such law, bringing the judiciary to be dominated by the executive organ.⁵ Thus, despite the provisions of the 2008 Constitution, the President of the Republic continues to “appoint, transfer, dismiss, suspend and can interfere with the so-called judicial power with no constitutional provisions to control and ensure that it is done in a fair, rational, objective and predictable manner.”⁶ The Constitution and although the right is not reserved to him alone, he reserves the majority right.⁷

Moreover, the President of the Republic is the one who chairs the Higher Judicial Council which is the body responsible for managing the career of magistrates, and is responsible for their appointment, promotion grading, and sanction. He equally benefits from the means that may allow him hinder either an ongoing judicial procedure or the application of a court decision (right to pardon).

However, the Higher Judicial Council in Cameroon (HJC) has not evolved from its merely advisory role into one that can actually help to secure the independence of the judiciary.⁸ The Higher Judicial Council of Cameroon shall meet once a year and has a right to its expression but the final decision still rest in the hands of the President of the Republic and he may as well disregard the advice given by the Council.⁹ Also the HJC has not made any significant contributions to the independence of the Cameroon judiciary. According to article 37 (3) of the amended 2008 constitution, the Higher Judicial Council is given advisory powers and the Council is governed by Law No. 82-14 of November 26, 1982 and subsequent amendments to the latter.¹⁰ Thus, although this advisory role is bestowed on the HJC, the President of the Republic still reserves the right to its final decisions meaning the advice of the HJC can be ignored.¹¹

Thus, the HJC since its founding cannot be said to have advanced the cause of independence of the judiciary in Cameroon. The lack of the independence of the Higher Judicial Council is the reason why the council hasn't sat within the last four years because the President of the Republic has not been available to preside over the council. To this effect, Magistrates from the last four badges from ENAM, (National School of Administration and Magistracy in Cameroon) were posted through a communique by the Director of General Affairs of the Ministry of Justice and have been deployed to courts in various regions majority of which do not have offices to carry out their duties.¹² Therefore, it remains essentially an institution which is under the control of the President of the Republic and has not acquired the independence to operate effectively to advance Constitutional Justice in the Country.¹³

Thus, this institutional reality in Cameroon presents a stark contrast to the theoretical principles of Separation of Powers. The dominance of the executive, the weakness of parliament, and the subservience of the judiciary demonstrates a constitutional framework hollowed out in practice. Genuine democratic consolidation in

¹ *Ibid.*

² Mbaku, *op.cit* pg. 370.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Circular No. 3-DL-1129 of the 15th March 1966 concerning the application of the new Penal Code (Promulgated by Law No. 65-LF-24 of the 12th November, 1965) pg. 111.

⁵ Mbaku, *op.cit* pg. 371.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Mbaku, *op.cit* pg, 371.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Service Note Number 013 and 014 of 13th December 2024.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Cameroon will require substantive institutional reform that ensures independence and accountability across all branches.

4. Conclusion: Revaluating the Architecture of Power in Cameroon

The Implementation of the principle of Separation of Powers in Cameroon, though constitutionally enshrined, remains largely symbolic. An x-ray of the Cameroonian regime reveals a constitutional façade that conceals deep structural imbalances. Despite the formal establishment of the three branches of government; the executive, legislative and judiciary, the practice of governance in Cameroon is characterized by hyper-presidentialism, weak institutional autonomy and a culture of executive supremacy. While the Constitution of 1996 outlines the framework for a modern democratic state with delineated functions for each branch, its operationalization is undermined by routine sluggishness and entrenched political practices. The executive branch, led by the President, wields disproportionate power through decree-making authority, appointment control, and emergency powers. Legislative institutions often act as ceremonial bodies, lacking the political will or independence to hold the executive accountable. The judiciary, despite its constitutional role as guardian of legality and protector of rights, suffers from politicization, inadequate funding and structural subordination to the executive.

The key challenges as elaborate above basically indicate the enormous powers given to the President of the Republic by the constitution, which creates executive overreach over the other arms of government and constitutional manipulation. Also, legislative docility and control of the ruling party which is a dominant party (CPDM) in the Legislature maintaining overwhelming control of Parliament, this has produced a rubber-stamp legislature that rarely exercises oversight or introduces independent legislative initiatives. Also vaguely defined emergency powers provisions in the Constitution allow the executive to invoke national security and public order to justify expansive powers, often without judicial or legislative review, as well as the existence of a limited civic engagement, and opposition voices face systematic restrictions, reducing external checks on power and limiting citizen participation in governance reforms.

5. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made for effective distribution of functions to state organs in order to improve the Separation of Powers in Cameroon.

- Reinforce Judicial Independence: in reinforcing judicial independence, there is a need for the restructure of the Higher Judicial Council to be more representative and independent, institute a merit-based, non-partisan judicial appointments and secure tenure for judges as well as increase judiciary funding to reduce executive dependence.
- Also, to revitalize the Legislature's role, there is a need to grant Parliament increased budgetary authority and committee oversight powers, enhance legislative transparency and allow independent members to introduce private bills, reduce party dominance through electoral reforms to ensure diverse representation.
- Also, restoring Constitutional term limits and executive accountability, will warrant to reinstate presidential term limits and institutionalize accountability measures such as mandatory parliamentary reporting and public policy results, and also promote a decentralized governance structure that empowers local institutions.
- Furthermore, empowering civil society and media by strengthening legal protections for press freedom and civic organizations, supporting civic education initiatives that promote constitutional literacy and democratic participation.
- Finally, to leverage regional and international norms by engaging with African Union bodies like African Peer Review Mechanism and global partners to align domestic institutions and international democratic standards and also encourage regional peer benchmarking on governance and judicial reforms.

Thus, for Cameroon to evolve into a constitutional democracy governed by checks and balances, it must transcend the symbolic adoption of Separation of Powers and embark on substantive institutional reforms. As political scholar Fombad aptly notes, "Constitutionalism in Africa will not thrive until institutions are insulated from personal rules and grounded in a culture of accountability."¹ True Separation of Powers is not merely the presence of institutional structures, but the effective functioning and independence of those structures. The Cameroonian regime stands at a crossroads: either deepen institutional capture or enhance reform. The choice will define not only the future of governance in Cameroon but the legitimacy of its democratic project.

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The Construction of a Dual Mechanism for Cultivating the Spirit of Rural Elites Among Public-Funded Teacher Trainees

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of China's rural revitalization strategy and the national initiative to build an education powerhouse, public-funded teacher trainees constitute the core force in developing rural teaching teams. Cultivating their spirit of rural elites is thus of paramount importance. Grounded in identity theory and relational sociology, this study constructs a dual cultivation mechanism for fostering the spirit of rural elites among these trainees. The "Pre-Service and Post-Service Integrated Mechanism" emphasizes holistic development throughout the career lifecycle. During the pre-service phase, strategies such as redefining talent development objectives, optimizing curriculum systems, and implementing contextualized teaching strengthen trainees' understanding of the spirit of rural elites. In the post-service phase, targeted professional development, diverse platform building, and cultural cultivation foster a deeper embodiment and practice of this spirit. Information sharing and resource integration ensure seamless continuity between pre-service cultivation and post-service implementation. The "Individual-Organization Synergy Mechanism" underscores bidirectional empowerment. At the individual level, mechanisms focus on awakening self-awareness, internalizing values, and cultivating behaviors to stimulate intrinsic motivation for identifying with the spirit of rural elites. At the organizational level, universities, governments, and society collaboratively create a supportive ecosystem for growth. Together, these mechanisms form a symbiotic network where "organizational support empowers individual practice, while individual actions reciprocally enrich organizational development." Through sustained cultivation over time and dynamic interaction between subjects and their environment in space, this dual mechanism provides a systematic solution for nurturing public-funded teacher trainees who are deeply rooted in local communities and capable of leading rural educational revitalization. This framework offers both theoretical innovation and practical guidance for addressing the persistent challenges of rural teachers being "unwilling to relocate to rural areas, unable to remain long-term, and struggling to teach effectively."

Keywords: public-funded teacher trainees, spirit of rural elites, identity theory, relational sociology

1. Introduction

At the pivotal historical juncture where rural revitalization intersects with the national strategy to build an education powerhouse, enhancing the quality and efficiency of rural education is crucial for consolidating the nation's foundation and ensuring future prosperity. The policy of public-funded teacher training programs serves as a vital institutional arrangement for precisely supplementing rural teaching staff and elevating educational standards. Its core value lies not only in supplying qualified teachers to rural schools but also in cultivating a professional team imbued with both educational passion and local sentiment, thereby reshaping the rural educational ecology and spearheading cultural revitalization in villages (Ren & Chen, 2020). Against this backdrop, the "spirit of rural elites" — a value concept integrating traditional rural virtues such as social responsibility, moral demonstration, and attachment to hometowns with modern intellectuals' traits of public service and cultural leadership—has become a central component of the spiritual lineage expected of

public-funded teacher trainees. This ethos demands that these trainees transcend their singular role as educators, evolving into “contemporary rural elites” who are deeply rooted in their communities, dedicated to contributing to their hometowns, and capable of leading positive social trends (Xiao, 2020). However, the cultivation of this spirit during the trainees’ transition from urban learners to rural educators faces multiple challenges, including identity confusion (Liu & Chen, 2022), the impact of urban-rural disparities (Hu, 2022), and conflicting motivations regarding returning to their hometowns (Zhou & Kuang, 2024). Building upon identity theory and relational sociology, this study systematically establishes dual pathways: an “integrated pre-service and post-service mechanism” and an “individual-organization synergy mechanism.” It aims to develop a systematic framework for cultivating the spirit of rural elites among public-funded teacher trainees. This initiative seeks to provide theoretical support and practical solutions for forging a new generation of educators who are deeply rooted in rural communities, dedicated to serving their hometowns, and cultivated in both virtue and competence, thereby empowering the sustainable revitalization of rural education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Training of Public-Funded Teacher Trainees

Public-funded teacher training serves as an effective approach to supplement the teaching workforce and promote balanced educational development. Internationally, scholars argue that such models ensure internal quality through rigorous admission standards and selection procedures (Tatto, 2015), establish curriculum frameworks and quality assurance systems for classroom instruction (Nazeer-Ikeda, 2014), develop graduation competency frameworks (Low & Tan, 2017), and create evaluation frameworks and tools for training programs (Neihart & Lee, 2017). Some researchers advocate specialized rural teacher training programs to enhance trainees’ rural learning experiences, helping them overcome urbanization tendencies and gain authentic exposure to rural education, thereby increasing their commitment to rural teaching (Halsey, 2018). Since 1949, China’s higher normal education tuition system has undergone three phases: primarily free (1949-1996), predominantly fee-based (1997-2006), and a coexistence of free and fee models (2007-present) (Lu, 2007). Current public-funded teacher education in China mainly consists of two models: “national public-funded teacher trainees” and “local public-funded teacher trainees” (also known as rural-oriented public-funded teacher trainees). This study specifically focuses on the latter. In recent years, research on cultivating rural-oriented public-funded teacher trainees has become a prominent academic focus, yielding substantial scholarly achievements. Methodologically, these studies can be categorized into empirical research and theoretical inquiry. Empirical studies have investigated policy attractiveness, curriculum systems, policy awareness, teaching internships, teacher competency, and rural teaching willingness among these trainees (Feng, 2018; Li, 2019; Yang & Li, 2019; Zhu, Wang, & Wu, 2022). Theoretical research has primarily examined risk prevention, training reforms, educational collaboration, institutional values, and identity conflicts in this context (Feng & Liu, 2019; Ren & Chen, 2020; Li, 2020; Su & Huang, 2021; Luo & Tang, 2021; Liu & Chen, 2022).

2.2 The Spirit of Rural Elites

Xiangxian (rural elites) refers to socially distinguished individuals who have made significant contributions through their accomplishments or moral integrity within their rural communities. The spirit of rural elites embodies the essence of traditional xiangxian culture, encompassing patriotic devotion, ethical excellence, social responsibility, and public service (Li, 2020). While the exact term “xiangxian” has no direct equivalent in Western languages, scholars have conducted extensive research on Chinese gentry/elites. Since the 1940s, foreign scholars have analyzed the role of the gentry, often seeing their power as distinct from or mediating state authority—a perspective initiated by Max Weber (1951) in *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Maurice Freedman later demonstrated through empirical studies that gentry served as intermediaries between state power and local communities, while Kung-chuan Hsiao (1967) similarly argued that structural changes in grassroots society primarily stemmed from power shifts between the state and gentry. Mary B. Rankin further explored this theme using Zhejiang Province during the Tongzhi Restoration as a case study, revealing how local elites actively participated in rural reconstruction and became key players in local governance. In contemporary China, accelerated rural urbanization has led to challenges including the loss of social elites and cultural leaders, disordered internal village governance, and stagnation in rural cultural development. Against this backdrop, there emerges an urgent need for new-era rural elites (xiangxian), their culture, and spirit to address these issues. Since 2014, the academic community has paid close attention to rural elites (xiangxian), new rural elites (xinxiangxian), and their cultural ethos, yielding a series of research achievements. These studies can be categorized into five main types: The first involves calls for cultivating new rural elites based on the needs of rural socio-economic development (Jiang, 2018). The second examines the connotations, characteristics, classifications, and positioning of rural elites and their cultural spirit (Zhang, 2016; Hu & Gao, 2017; Gao, 2019). The third focuses on the roles of rural elites—particularly new ones—in rural construction, development, and revitalization (Li, 2017; Liu & Wang, 2019). The fourth explores the cultural value, construction, and

cultivation of the spirit of rural elites (Ji & Shi, 2018; Gong & Zheng, 2019). The fifth investigates rural teachers as new rural elites (Xiao, 2021; Zhou & He, 2023; Ren & Zhu, 2024). Notably, existing research indicates that rural teachers have been incorporated into the category of new rural elites, becoming representative figures embodying this ethos. The shaping of rural teachers' virtuous image and the cultivation of their spiritual essence have gradually emerged as new focal points. Within the contemporary inquiry of "cultivating rural teachers as new rural elites," how to transform public-funded teacher trainees into educators imbued with the new-era spirit of rural elites has become a crucial research topic.

3. Dual Theoretical Basis for Cultivating the Spirit of Rural Elites

3.1 Identity Theory: Conceptual Anchors for Pre-Service and Post-Service Development

Identity theory illuminates the dynamic process through which individuals continuously question and construct answers to fundamental questions such as "Who am I?", "Where do I come from?", and "Where should I go?" (Erikson, 1968). It encompasses three interwoven dimensions: self-identity (an individual's internal recognition and acceptance of their role), other-identity (society's expectations and evaluations of an individual's role), and collective identity (a person's sense of belonging and shared values within a group).

Public-funded teacher trainees embody multifaceted yet profound identities: As "rural educators," they are professional implementers and guardians of rural education; as "intellectuals," they serve as disseminators, critics, and innovators of rural culture; as "contemporary rural elites," they act as public spiritual exemplars bridging tradition and modernity, guiding moral governance in rural communities. This complex identity transcends simplistic occupational categorization. Cultivating their spirit of rural elites fundamentally involves deepening, consolidating, and elevating their core identity as "contemporary rural elites." This process must initiate during pre-service training. Systematic value guidance, immersion in local culture, and practical experiences help trainees establish self-identification as "future rural elites" (germination of self-identity), understand society's and rural communities' profound expectations for their roles (guidance of other-identity), and develop collective honor and mission regarding the "public-funded trainee group" as a vital force in rural revitalization (laying the foundation for collective identity).

During pre-service training, public-funded teacher trainees undergo foundational knowledge acquisition and initial identity formation. They develop professional awareness as future educators and community leaders. From an identity development perspective, trainees must first embrace their role as teacher candidates. Through structured pedagogical training and practical teaching experiences at training institutions, they gain a comprehensive understanding of educational principles and methodologies. Practical observations in primary/secondary classrooms allow them to experience firsthand the working environment and responsibilities of educators. Simultaneously, their recognition of the spirit of rural elites begins to take root. Institutions employ cultural immersion programs and lectures on exemplary local figures to help trainees understand regional heritage, historical context, and developmental needs, thereby fostering a sense of hometown pride and social responsibility. For instance, inviting renowned community leaders to share stories of contributing to local education inspires trainees to contemplate their own potential contributions. Through such interactions, trainees gradually cultivate an initial understanding of the spirit of rural elites.

As public-funded teacher trainees transition into their professional roles, sustained identity development becomes crucial. These educators face the dual challenge of bridging theoretical knowledge with practical implementation. They must enhance their teaching expertise while actively embodying the spirit of rural elites through concrete actions. By providing professional development support, creating platforms for value realization, and strengthening community integration in rural areas, we can help them solidify their identity as "contemporary rural elites" in daily work. This approach addresses potential identity confusion and value conflicts, facilitating a transformation from external contractual constraints to internal value-driven motivation. Ultimately, this enables the spirit of rural elites to become deeply ingrained as both their professional ethos and life creed.

3.2 Relational Sociology: The Individual-Organization Symbiotic Network

Relational sociology positions individuals as "relational beings" embedded within intricate social networks (Emirbayer, 1997). Their roles, identities, behaviors, and mental worlds are continually shaped and manifested through ongoing interactions with others, groups, and environments. This framework reveals humanity's social nature: individuals are not isolated entities but are deeply embedded in complex relational frameworks; their identities, behaviors, and roles are profoundly shaped by their network positioning, relationship types, and interaction quality (Donati, 2011).

The core characteristics of the public-funded trainee system—targeted enrollment, targeted cultivation, and targeted employment—naturally construct a unique, strong relational network. Through public resource investments, the state establishes contractual agreements with teacher trainees, requiring them to commit to

serving specific rural communities. This institutional arrangement transcends simple job placement, transforming “return to hometown teaching” into a “reintegration into relational structures” that entails multiple role expectations. These intricate relational networks and their dynamic interactions provide fertile ground for nurturing the rural responsibility, public sentiment, and service consciousness inherent in the spirit of rural elites.

Individual Role: Public-funded teacher trainees form the core of cultivating this spirit. Their personal values, interests, and capabilities significantly influence its development. Each trainee possesses unique characteristics and developmental needs, requiring tailored approaches that address individual differences and stimulate intrinsic motivation. For instance, those demonstrating strong aptitude in arts education could be guided to integrate artistic practices with local cultural heritage through community engagement initiatives. Individual initiative and creativity play a pivotal role; without genuine identification with or pursuit of the spirit, even abundant organizational resources would prove ineffective.

Institutional Role (Pre-Service): Educational institutions play a vital role. As pre-service training organizations, teacher training colleges should provide quality learning environments and resources to help trainees build comprehensive knowledge systems and facilitate identity development. By developing well-structured training programs and strengthening faculty teams, schools lay a solid foundation for trainees’ growth. For example, institutions collaborate with local education authorities and schools to establish stable educational practice bases, offering more hands-on opportunities. Additionally, schools emphasize developing teamwork skills and social responsibility through organized activities and volunteer services, enabling trainees to grow through collective experiences.

Organizational Role (Post-Service): In the post-service phase, placement schools and education authorities should provide sustained support and guidance. Schools can enhance professional development through school-based training and teaching seminars. Meanwhile, education departments may establish supportive policies to encourage trainees in contributing to hometown development and educational reforms.

Interdependence: Individuals and organizations maintain an interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship. Organizations provide platforms and resources for personal development, while individuals’ growth energizes organizational advancement. For instance, when public-funded trainees achieve remarkable educational outcomes guided by the spirit of rural elites, they bring positive changes to local education and enhance the reputation of their schools and affiliated organizations. Recognition and support from these institutions further motivate individuals to actively practice this spirit, creating a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement.

Identity theory and relational sociology provide a crucial theoretical foundation for constructing the cultivation mechanism for the spirit of rural elites among public-funded teacher trainees, playing key roles at different stages (pre-service/post-service) and levels (individual/organization).

4. Integrated Pre-Service/Post-Service Mechanism for Cultivating the Spirit of Rural Elites

Cultivating the spirit of rural elites among public-funded teacher trainees is a lifelong project spanning their careers. We must break down barriers between pre-service training and post-service development, building an integrated cultivation system characterized by consistent goals, connected content, and continuous deepening.

4.1 Pre-Service Operational Mechanism: Foundation and Ignition

The pre-service phase serves as the foundational stage for cultivating trainees’ spiritual framework, emotional attitudes, and initial behavioral tendencies rooted in the spirit of rural elites. This essential component must be systematically integrated throughout the talent development process. Universities, as cornerstones of the educational system, shoulder critical responsibilities by employing diverse approaches to guide trainees in developing the spirit of rural elites.

Integrate the Spirit of Rural Elites into Talent Cultivation Programs to Redefine Educational Objectives: As the overarching framework for higher education, academic programs determine curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and evaluation systems (Zhu & Liu, 2014). The precision of talent cultivation goals directly impacts teaching quality and educational outcomes. To establish a pre-service mechanism for nurturing this spirit, we must incorporate the concept of rural elites. For instance, clearly define “future rural educators with profound local sentiment, strong social responsibility, and leadership potential as rural elites” as core program objectives. Graduation requirements should detail the essence of this spirit through knowledge, skills, and competency benchmarks, such as “understanding rural socio-cultural structures,” “mastering rural educational resource development capabilities,” “cultivating awareness of collaborative education among families, schools, and communities,” and “identifying their future roles as rural elites.”

Deeply Integrate the Spirit of Rural Elites into the Curriculum System, Constructing a Multi-Dimensional Cognitive Framework: Curriculum development is core to pre-service teacher training. Higher education

institutions should incorporate knowledge about this spirit into the curriculum through three key approaches:

Establish Specialized Explicit Courses: Offer courses such as “History of Rural Education Development,” “Rural China and Rural Education,” “Rural Social Governance and Teacher Roles,” “Rural Sociology,” and “Educational Ethics” as required or elective courses. These systematically explain the historical origins, contemporary value, and practical applications of the spirit of rural elites in rural education.

Embed Elements into Professional Courses: Integrate elements of this spirit into courses like pedagogical methodologies, Chinese educational history, and classroom management. For example, highlight exemplary deeds and educational philosophies of historical rural educator-elites to demonstrate their crucial contributions. Emphasize the value of local literature in language teaching and incorporate collaborative scenarios involving families, schools, and communities in classroom management.

Strengthen the “Rural Orientation” in Practical Education: Establish stable rural educational practice bases and organize trainees to conduct teaching observations and research at rural schools. Enhance rural school internships by including specialized tasks like “local cultural immersion” (e.g., investigating rural elites) and “embodying grassroots service” (e.g., participating in community initiatives), allowing participants to experience the dedication of local role models. Encourage trainees to engage in volunteer teaching programs in rural areas, strengthening their sense of belonging and commitment.

Infuse the Educational Context with the Spirit of Rural Elites, Employing Diversified Approaches to Activate Emotional Resonance: Teaching is central to university talent cultivation, serving crucial roles in knowledge transmission, skill development, and quality enhancement (Xie, 2014). Adopt methods like case-based teaching, scenario simulations, and project-based learning to engage students in in-depth discussions on topics such as “current issues in rural education,” “exemplary rural teacher-elites,” and “challenges in preserving local cultural heritage,” thereby stimulating emotional resonance and critical thinking.

Case-Based Teaching: Utilize authentic cases of rural teachers embodying the spirit, analyzing their traits, behaviors, and success factors.

Scenario Simulations: Design complex rural education scenarios (e.g., parent-teacher conflicts, innovative teaching, cultural preservation), enabling trainees to experience decision-making and develop essential communication, coordination, and leadership skills.

Project-Based Learning: Focus on real-world rural issues (e.g., caring for left-behind children, developing local curriculum resources, promoting cultural heritage), forming interdisciplinary student teams to tackle these challenges, cultivating a sense of rural responsibility.

Role Model Influence: Regularly invite outstanding public-funded trainees or rural teachers deeply rooted in and serving their communities to return for exchanges, enhancing the influence of role models and the attractiveness of this career path.

4.2 Post-Service Operational Mechanism: Deepening and Practice

After entering the workforce, public-funded teacher trainees’ professional development and career growth play a crucial role in continuously cultivating and strengthening the spirit of rural elites. The post-employment phase serves as the practical arena where this spirit undergoes rigorous testing, deepens internalization, and achieves sustained elevation within the authentic rural context. This stage marks the core transition from cognitive recognition to behavioral manifestation, and from individual enlightenment to social value realization.

Provide Tailored Post-Service Professional Development to Deepen the Spirit. As a crucial method for professional growth, post-service training becomes a core vehicle for nurturing this spirit. Local education authorities should conduct comprehensive surveys on practical challenges and competency gaps encountered by trainees in fulfilling their roles as rural elites, organizing regular training sessions. Integrate themes such as rural education development strategies, local curriculum resource development, and innovative inheritance of rural elite culture. Key topics include “The Role and Mission of Rural Educators in the New Era,” “Collaborative Education Strategies for Rural Schools and Communities,” “In-depth Development and Practice of Local Curriculum Resources,” “Educational Approaches for Cultural Heritage Innovation in Rural Areas,” and “Teacher Leadership in Rural Education Governance.” These sessions emphasize the significance and value of preserving and practicing the spirit. Through this training, trainees gain insights into rural education developments, master practical methods for applying the spirit, and deepen their understanding of its cultural essence.

Actively Establish Diversified Practical Platforms to Facilitate Transformation into Concrete Actions. Post-service development requires support from professional platforms. Creating diverse practice and exchange stages enables the transformation of the spirit of rural elites into actionable practices.

Build Professional Learning Communities: Establish “Public-Funded Teacher Trainee Growth Communities” at

county or school district levels, organizing online and offline thematic teaching research, experience sharing, case studies, and reading salons to foster collaboration and mutual growth. For instance, rural schools encourage trainees to participate in research projects like “Developing Characteristic Curriculum for Rural Education.” During this process, trainees delve into local cultural resources, creating school-based curricula with regional characteristics, enriching the curriculum system while inheriting and practicing the spirit.

Establish Community Integration Platforms: Encourage and support trainees to participate in village council meetings, cultural activities, and volunteer organizations, engaging in rural governance, cultural preservation, and public services, promoting the spirit’s transition from theory to practice.

Build Online Support Platforms: Leverage information technology to establish cross-regional online communities for resource sharing, discussion of challenges, and seeking support.

Organize Recognition Events: Conduct events such as “Rural Teacher Spirit Sharing Sessions,” “Local Education Innovation Exhibitions,” and “Most Outstanding Rural Teacher” selections. These initiatives enhance the visibility and prestige of the spirit among trainees, promoting its practical implementation.

Cultivate a Campus Culture that Honors Teachers and Values the Educator-Elite Role. Rural schools are the trainees’ workplace. The cultural environment significantly influences the deepening and practical application of their commitment to this spirit. Actively fostering a culture that honors teachers and values the educator-elite role enhances cultivation effectiveness.

Educational Integration: Prioritize nurturing this spirit by exploring the integration of “cultivating new-era educator-elites” as a key faculty development objective, embedding it into school goals, mottos, traditions, and practices.

Institutional Frameworks: Revise teacher evaluation systems to include contributions such as community service, cultural heritage preservation, and local curriculum development as key assessment criteria, providing appropriate resource allocation and incentives.

Exemplary Promotion: Establish role models of teachers rooted in and serving their communities, publicizing outstanding educators embodying the spirit, and creating “Rural Elite Teacher Studios” to inspire through relatable stories, cultivating a strong organizational culture of professional ethics, responsibility, and service to the hometown community.

4.3 Pre-Service/Post-Service Integration Mechanism: Seamless Connection and Continuous Growth

The pre-service and post-service operational mechanisms should not be isolated but interconnected, forming an integrated system. This seamless mechanism combines pre-service training with post-service development to create a coherent framework for nurturing the spirit of rural elites. Breaking down barriers ensures continuity in spiritual cultivation. Establishing this integrated mechanism is crucial for maintaining continuity and effectiveness. To achieve seamless and sustained reinforcement, the key lies in creating a coordinated system featuring information sharing, feedback adjustment, and resource connectivity.

Information Sharing for Integrated Tracking. Provincial education authorities or designated universities should establish a comprehensive information database covering trainees’ entire career cycle—from enrollment to post-service development. This database should document academic performance, internship experiences, professional training, work achievements, and exemplary practices in rural governance, forming a tracking platform for “cultivation-employment-development” trajectories. Leveraging this foundation, establish regular feedback mechanisms between training institutions and employers. Training institutions can monitor graduates’ career progression to refine pre-service programs and optimize cultivation strategies. Employers can utilize student profiles to enhance job placement and career guidance, strengthening cultivation outcomes and achieving precise alignment between talent supply and demand.

Resource Connectivity through Collaborative Platforms. Building upon tripartite training agreements, universities, local authorities, and schools should form collaborative training communities, strengthening partnerships and enhancing connections.

Joint Teaching Research: University faculty, local education specialists, and outstanding rural teachers form collaborative teams to jointly develop training programs, design curricula, address challenges in cultivating the spirit, and co-create educational resources for pre-service and post-service stages, reinforcing the cultivation system.

Dual Mentorship Model: Explore a “dual mentorship” system combining university instructors with rural school mentors to provide continuous professional guidance and inspiration. Throughout both phases, university and rural educators collaborate to help trainees understand, appreciate, and practice the spirit. Simultaneously, university faculty provide teaching guidance in rural schools, while rural teachers participate in university training programs, continuously improving trainee development quality and solidifying the cultivation

mechanism.

In general, the integrated pre-service/post-service mechanism for cultivating the spirit of rural elites can provide a favorable environment and conditions for the growth and development of public-funded teacher trainees, serving as an important guarantee for the generation of this spirit.

5. Individual-Organization Synergy Mechanism for Cultivating the Spirit of Rural Elites Among Public-Funded Teacher Trainees

The emergence of the spirit of rural elites results from the co-construction of internal consciousness and the external environment, necessitating resonance between individual initiative and organizational support. The synergy between individuals and organizations constitutes another critical mechanism for cultivating this spirit among public-funded teacher trainees.

5.1 Individual-Level Mechanisms: Awakening Endogenous Motivation

The cultivation of the spirit of rural elites relies on both personal awakening and proactive engagement. Inner awakening forms the bedrock for nurturing this ethos. When individuals genuinely explore and understand the virtues embodied by rural elites—such as philanthropy, professional dedication, and educational commitment—they develop a true appreciation for its value. Proactive engagement then provides the nourishment that allows this spirit to flourish. Individuals must not merely acknowledge the spirit but actively integrate it into daily life and actions, perpetuating and advancing it through personal practice. This underscores that individual-level mechanisms play a fundamental role in cultivation, focusing on trainees' self-awareness development, value formation, and behavioral refinement.

Self-Awareness Awakening: The primary task is to awaken trainees' profound understanding and inner recognition of the spirit of rural elites. Only when trainees genuinely comprehend the qualities of dedication, responsibility, and leadership inherent in this spirit, and embrace its value and significance, can they internalize it as a personal conviction. This enables them to actively practice the spirit as role models when serving rural education, thereby contributing to its development and comprehensive rural revitalization. Through pre-service training and post-service guidance, instructors can employ inquiry-based thinking and guided reflection to help trainees deeply explore questions like "Why did I choose to become a rural educator?", "What do I understand about the spirit of rural elites?", and "What educational ideals do I hope to achieve in rural areas?" This process helps them grasp the complexity of rural education challenges, proactively seek solutions, experience responsibility and value through problem-solving, strengthen confidence and capability in transforming the rural educational ecosystem, gradually comprehend, judge, and affirm the spirit and its value, continuously examine their own behaviors and motivations in assuming the role of rural elites, achieve conscious growth of this spirit, and even integrate it into their career aspirations and life planning.

Value Internalization: The core mission is to guide trainees in internalizing the spirit of rural elites as a value framework. Cultivation should not remain at the level of external advocacy but must evolve from superficial acceptance to deep internalization, achieving a transformation from "external norms" to "internal awareness." Only when elements of the spirit—such as national sentiment, local identity, and dedication—truly integrate into trainees' ideological concepts and value systems, forming unique value frameworks, can the spirit exert powerful spiritual leadership. Only then can trainees consciously adopt it as their value compass, truly practicing it in rural schools and communities by understanding local conditions, fulfilling responsibilities, and implementing actions, striving to become new rural elites. This necessitates emphasizing hands-on experiences. For instance, through close observation of rural elites' practical actions in rural governance, educational support, and cultural preservation, witnessing their exemplary conduct and sense of responsibility, trainees can profoundly appreciate the positive impact of the spirit on rural society. This leads to deep emotional resonance and the gradual formation of a value system centered on patriotism, attachment to hometowns, and selfless dedication.

Behavioral Cultivation: A crucial mission is to facilitate the externalization of the internalized spirit into practical actions. Cultivation should not remain theoretical or aspirational—it requires demonstration through concrete deeds. Only through continuous refinement in practice can the spirit truly become an internalized and externally manifested conscious action. The practical implementation means trainees must not only deeply understand the spirit's cultural essence and value theoretically but also actively practice it through daily teaching activities and engagement in rural social affairs. Specifically: On the podium, they should impart knowledge with profound responsibility and mission, enlightening students' minds and becoming spiritual beacons. Beyond the classroom, they should proactively engage in rural development, participate in community building, care for villagers' well-being, and demonstrate the spirit of "applying knowledge to benefit rural areas" through concrete actions. This cultivation represents a continuous transformation from theory to practice, from cognition to action, demanding that trainees embody the spirit and translate it into tangible contributions to rural education and development.

5.2 Organizational-Level Mechanisms: Creating Fertile External Ground

An organizational environment, much like soil, profoundly shapes the direction and growth of individuals' spiritual development. A responsible and mission-driven organizational atmosphere nurtures trainees' spirit of rural elites as gently as spring rain nourishes vegetation. Organizational mechanisms aim to create an ecosystem conducive to this cultivation. Within this system, organizations serve not only as fertile ground but also as indispensable catalysts for vigorous growth. As a crucial safeguard, these mechanisms leverage the collective efforts of schools, governments, and social organizations to establish an optimal environment.

Role of Educational Institutions: Just as schools play a leading role in human development, pre-service training institutions and post-service placement schools serve as pivotal platforms for cultivation. On one hand, educational institutions can foster this ethos through curriculum design. For instance, specialized courses on rural education can help students understand its historical context, current status, and future trends, strengthening their sense of identity and mission. Institutions may also organize thematic activities such as storytelling sessions, documentary screenings, and case studies to vividly demonstrate the practical manifestations and noble values of rural elites, inspiring trainees to embrace the spirit. On the other hand, leaders at post-service schools should lead by example, promoting values like serving rural communities, taking responsibility, and making selfless contributions, setting a model for trainees. Additionally, schools can integrate the spirit into institutional culture through systems, ceremonies, stories, and symbolic elements, creating an organizational environment conducive to its nurturing.

Role of Government: The government plays a guiding and supportive role in the institutional framework. By formulating scientific educational policies, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing teacher professional development, the government provides solid institutional safeguards and practical platforms. It can effectively elevate the social status of rural teachers, ensure their benefits and professional dignity, fostering a strong societal atmosphere of respecting educators. This allows trainees to feel the respect accorded to inheritors of the spirit, igniting their inner sense of mission and responsibility. Additionally, the government could issue dedicated policies elevating the cultivation of rural elites to a strategic level, explicitly designating it as a core objective of the public-funded teacher trainee program. This initiative would grant the cultivation robust policy legitimacy and backing. Simultaneously, at inauguration ceremonies, commendation events, and major festivals for trainees, the government should design solemn and meaningful rituals to reinforce their understanding and identification with the spirit, further inspiring their commitment to serving rural communities. Through its policy decisions, effective actions, and leadership in organizing the cultivation process, the government lays a solid foundation for nurturing outstanding trainees imbued with the spirit, injecting continuous momentum into rural education development.

Role of Social Organizations: Social organizations play a complementary and supportive role. These entities can provide practical platforms and resource support through various channels. For instance, non-profit organizations may collaborate with teacher training institutions to organize volunteer programs in rural education, enabling trainees to engage directly in grassroots teaching practices. Public discourse also serves as an effective catalyst. Media outlets should highlight exemplary cases of outstanding trainees, creating role models that inspire more students to dedicate themselves to rural education. By utilizing diverse platforms including newspapers, television, and digital media, the positive contributions of these trainees to rural development and their exemplary conduct can be effectively showcased. This approach helps establish their positive public image, enhances their professional prestige and social recognition, thereby solidifying the tangible outcomes of cultivating the spirit of rural elites.

5.3 Individual-Organization Synergistic Integration: Value Co-Creation and Ecological Optimization

Individuals and organizations are not isolated entities; they require the establishment of an interactive, mutually reinforcing collaborative ecosystem. In cultivating the spirit of rural elites, individual-level mechanisms should not be separated from organizational frameworks but should achieve synergistic enhancement through dynamic interaction. For instance, in rural education practice, a trainee might spontaneously develop service aspirations due to emerging local sentiments, while the organization provides growth platforms and resource support through institutional arrangements. This two-way empowerment process not only ignites individuals' sense of responsibility and emotional identification but also strengthens organizational cultural cohesion and value leadership. Only through this approach can we establish an integrated cultivation mechanism—grounded in individual initiative and supported by organizational guidance—achieving deep integration between spiritual inheritance and educational missions. Therefore, the synergistic integration mechanism can fully leverage the strengths of both parties, maximizing cultivation effectiveness.

Organizational Support Empowers Individuals: Schools, governments, and society provide strong external empowerment through key approaches: offering role models (to inspire emulation), building platforms (to facilitate proactive engagement), fostering conducive cultural environments (to nurture value beliefs), and

granting public recognition (to enhance role identity).

Individual Practices Enrich Organizations: The educational innovations, cultural preservation, and community services driven by trainees embodying the spirit continuously enrich schools and communities. This process injects new vitality into organizational culture, establishes new benchmarks, validates and reinforces advocated values, ultimately creating a virtuous cycle where organizational contributions feed back into the cultivation system.

Dynamic Synergy: The key lies in establishing dynamic dialogue mechanisms that bridge communication channels, enabling two-way information flow. Individuals provide feedback on practical needs, implementation challenges, and development suggestions to organizations, driving continuous adjustments in support systems and enhancing policy relevance. Organizations optimize resource allocation based on these insights, refine institutional frameworks, and disseminate exemplary practices to establish replicable models. Through sustained interaction and mutual feedback, individuals and organizations form a symbiotic relationship fostering shared prosperity in cultivating the spirit. This collaborative mechanism evolves through positive cycles, effectively strengthening the systematic and sustainable development of the cultivation process, ultimately yielding more outstanding rural educators imbued with the spirit of rural elites.

6. Conclusion

The cultivation of the spirit of rural elites among public-funded teacher trainees is a strategic initiative to address the deep-seated challenges in rural education—such as “unwillingness to relocate, inability to remain long-term, and struggles with teaching effectively”—while activating internal drivers for comprehensive rural revitalization. Grounded in identity theory and relational sociology, this study systematically constructs dual cultivation pathways: an integrated pre-service-post-service mechanism and an individual-organization synergy mechanism. The former focuses on lifelong development over time, emphasizing systematic pre-service foundations and targeted post-service empowerment to ensure continuous cultivation. The latter emphasizes spatial activation and environmental creation, highlighting the need to stimulate trainees’ intrinsic initiative while systematically optimizing external environments (policy support, cultural atmosphere, platform development), thereby achieving resonance between personal value pursuits and organizational-social functions.

The establishment and effective operation of this dual mechanism not only provide trainees with a clear path for spiritual growth and professional development, enabling them to find professional dignity and life value through practicing deeply rooted rural education, but also aim to reshape the spiritual elevation and cultural character of rural education itself. When cohorts of trainees, combining educational wisdom with the responsibility of contemporary rural elites, truly become cultural beacons, moral exemplars, and developmental engines in rural society, rural education can break free from the constraints of instrumental rationality. It can return to its fundamental mission of “nurturing people” and “transforming villages,” becoming a core source of strength that nourishes rural civilization, unites community spirit, and leads rural revitalization. Realizing this vision requires sustained policy support from the state, proactive actions by local governments, deep participation from higher education institutions, and broad acceptance from rural communities. Together, these efforts will lay solid foundations for cultivating the spirit of rural elites among public-funded teacher trainees, composing a magnificent chapter in the revitalization of rural education and cultural renaissance in the new era.

Fund Project

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Linking Financial Literacy, Social Capital, and Financial Inclusion Among Women Entrepreneurs in Manyu Division, Cameroon

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Abstract

Financial inclusion has a wide range of positive effect on entrepreneurial activities, but studies indicate a lack of awareness about financial services in the large group of financially excluded individuals especially women in the economy. Most efforts to increase financial inclusion have emphasized financial literacy provided through formal training and education without due recognition that people's financial behavior and practices may also be motivated by social interactions, belongingness and interpersonal relationships. To resolve this, this study has as specific objectives: to examine the influence of financial literacy on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division; to assess the effect of financial literacy on social capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division; to examine the effect of social capital on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division and to examine the mediating effect of social capital in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. Methodologically, the result was estimated using Ordinary Least Squared with data collected among 466 women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division using well-structured questionnaire. The result shows that financial literacy is strongly corroborating with financial inclusion (38.28%) and social capital (22.31%). In the case of social capital, it was observed that it's more of Mamfe Central (11.25%), Upper Banyang (1.57%) and Akwaya (6.96%) phenomenon. Social capital is equally observed to be strongly correlating with financial inclusion (29.18%) and it's both secondary (28.4%) and higher education (44.57%) phenomenon. The mediation result shows that social capital is marginally mediating in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion. The findings suggest that the decision makers should create more awareness via financial technical workshop on the relevance of financial literacy on financial inclusion and social capital in Manyu division in particular and Cameroon in general. This is a wise-step towards business performance and amelioration of economic well-being.

Keywords: financial literacy, social capital, financial inclusion, Manyu Division, Cameroon

1. Introduction

Issues related to financial literacy, social capital and financial inclusion are top in the policy agenda of most countries and international organizations in the World today as stipulated by the Sustainable Development Goal number three (SDG 3) of the United Nations Organization. According to Bagudu & Khan (2016), the inability of most women to access appropriate and affordable finance poses a great challenge to women entrepreneurship's successful performance in Cameroon. In most developing economies, women-entrepreneurs are not very competitive when compared to their male counterparts (Piacentini, 2013; Vossenbergh, 2013). Some women entrepreneurs have slow growth due to inadequate funding for their enterprises (Kumar, 2013). Proper finance of SMEs is essential to achieving the growth and sustainability objectives in business (IMF, 2019). Finance is the life wire for entrepreneurial activities and its absence turn to cause business failure, stunted growth, and early exit (Horan, 2022).

According to World Bank (2020), Cameroon has an area of 475 422 square meters and its capital is Yaounde.

English and French are her official languages. The country has a population of 26,635,592 (52% women), and it has an annual growth rate of 2.6%. 42.2% of the population is under the age of 15. On average, every Cameroonian woman gives birth to 5.1 children. In large cities such as Yaounde or Douala, women are more numerous, probably as a result of male migration to the cities for employment/economic opportunities. Cameroon is endowed with rich natural resources, including oil and gas, minerals, high-value species of timber, and agricultural products, such as coffee, cotton, cocoa, maize, and cassava. The country's general poverty rate is estimated at 39% (World Bank, 2019).

Cameroon faces humanitarian and security challenges in three ways: the Boko Haram insurgency of Nigerian origin in the north, a separatist conflict in the English-speaking provinces in the west, and cross-border threats from the Central African Republic (CAR) in the east. Cameroon's economy depends heavily on exports of primary commodities, mainly oil and oil products, wood, aluminum and agricultural products such as coffee, cocoa and cotton. As a result, Cameroon is ranked 151 out of 188 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index (2018), above many African countries. The annual economic growth has averaged 4.3% over the past decade, not consistently outpacing population growth. Real GDP was 4.2% in 2019, compared to 4.1% in 2018. This growth was driven by an increase in gas production; a slower contraction in the oil sector; continuous dynamism in the construction, processing and logging sectors; and a robust service sector. On the demand side, private consumption and investment in the transport and construction sectors are the main contributors to this growth (World bank, 2019). The economy of Cameroon benefits significantly from the services sector (51.84%) with low level of industrialization and poor mechanization of agriculture.

1.1 Presentation of Manyu Division

Manyu division is one of the divisions that makes up the six divisions of the south west region in Cameroon. It has four subdivisions which include: Eyumojock subdivision, Mamfe subdivision, Akwaya subdivision and Upper Bayang subdivision. It is bordered by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the West, The Northwest region in the North, Ndian division in the south and in the west by Kupe Manenguba. This division is situated in the Equatorial rainforest from two to sixth degree North and characterized by heavy rainfall of about 2000mm. The average temperature is about 25o Celsius. Thus, the climatic conditions are much favourable in the cultivation of both staple and cash crops.

Manyu division just like any other division in Cameroon is mostly characterized by a rural population with Mamfe town which is the biggest town and capital of Manyu division serving as the only semi-urban setting. The main economic activities are centered on agriculture and trading. They produce some food crops such as maize, plantains, cassava, Cocoyam, Yams, Bananas, vegetables, etc. The main cash crops produced by indigenes of this division include Cocoa and Oil palm which serve as the greatest source of income to the locals.

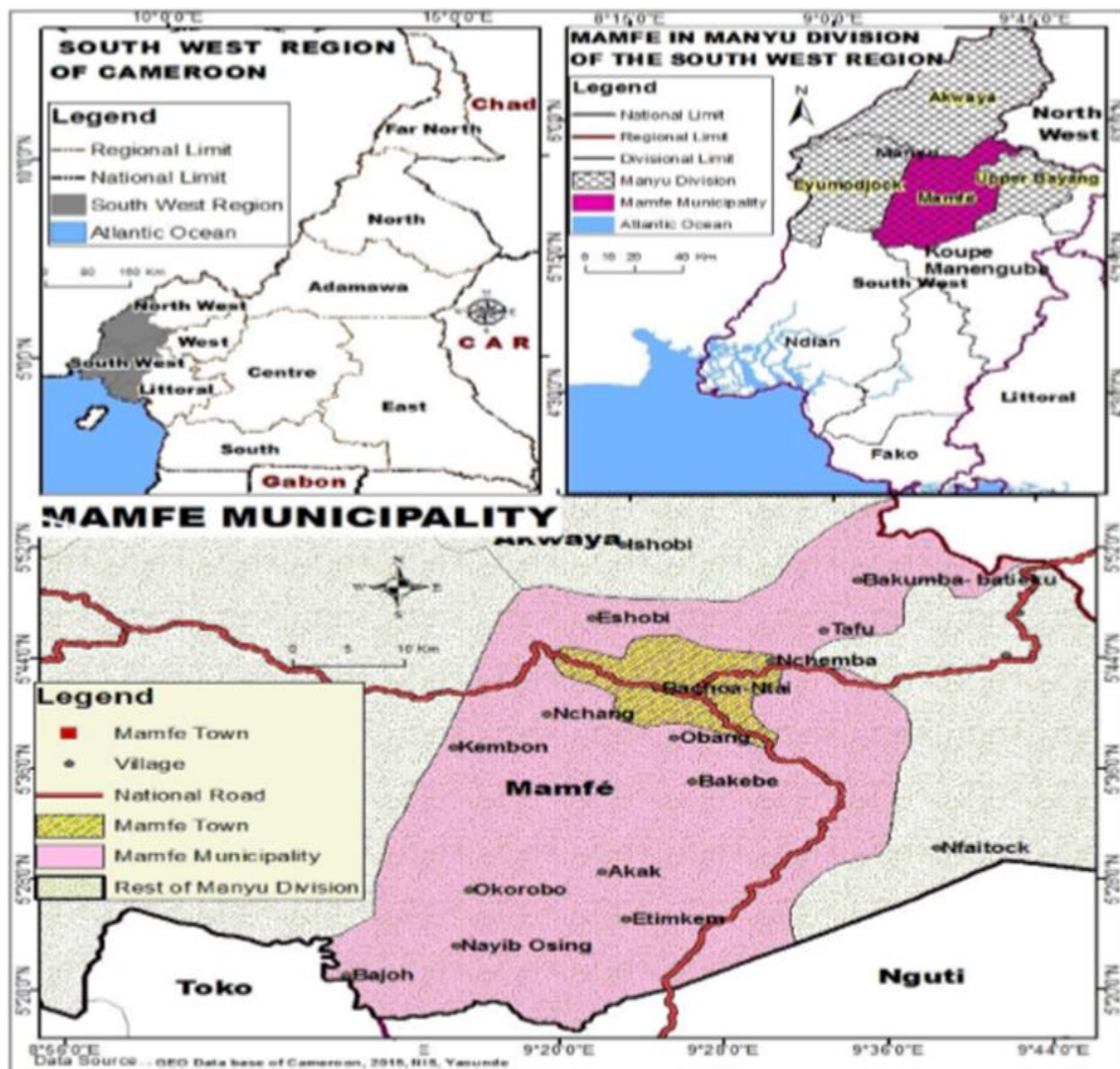


Figure 1. Map illustrating the geographical location of Manyu Division and the transportation network
Source: Neba (2002).

The division has a road transportation network linking the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Northwest region and the rest of southwest regions following the tarring of Bamenda-Mamfe-Ekok stretch of road and Mamfe-Kumba road respectively as seen in Figure 4 below. According to Neba (2002) in his book *Geography of Cameroon*, this improvement in transportation network has brought about increase in trading activities especially for agricultural products with the greatest demand coming from neighboring country Nigeria which is the most populated Nation in Africa. Research and development activities in recent times in Manyu division have faced numerous challenges due to the crisis situation in that part of the country. The main activity practiced in this region is agriculture dominated by the cultivation of both cash and food crops. The division is mostly characterized by rural settings. Over 80% of the population lives in rural dwellings with the only major town being Mamfe town which hosts government and private institutions and is the capital of Manyu division.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Justifications

The global financial crisis of 2008 and in addition to the subsequent recession in many parts of the world, coupled with the inability of many African countries including Cameroon to achieve the mandate of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has contributed to the increase debate and research on how to stimulate economic activities in order to achieve growth and development in developing countries. Based on the Global Financial Inclusion Database (2018), the percentage of adult population with an account at formal financial institutions (FFIs) is 69%, which means that, about one-third of the adult population in the world are financially excluded. Note that not all individuals with an account at a FFIs are fully financially included, since a considerable number of them will be unable to receive loans for various reasons — such as risk management and a limited supply of

funds. The percentage of adults who have saved at or borrowed from FFIs is much lower, only 26.7% and 10.8%, respectively (World Bank, 2020). These results show that most individuals do not have access to financial products and services.

Cameroon was rank 151 out of 191 countries as per the 2021/2022 Human Development Index. According to IMF (2021) issues such as poverty, limited access to financial services, low financial education and literacy, lack of trust in financial institutions and failed policies have hindered entrepreneurial activities especially among the women and slow down the rate of growth and development. Although there has been some economic progress, poverty remains a significant problem in Cameroon. An estimated 37.5 percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line with that figure rising above 70 percent in some regions.

In Cameroon as elsewhere, women's poverty, their comparative lack of leadership and participation in decision making and their lack of control over assets, often attributed to a number of personal factors, including low literacy, skills, self-esteem, financial security, and level of awareness of their rights. However, women in Cameroon live in a predominantly patriarchal society in which their economic dependency on men is reinforced by discretionary laws and policies in public institutions (Endeley, 1998; World Bank, 1994; Nji, 1994). The position of women in Cameroon is weak, though there is a National Gender Equality Policy. This doesn't extend to economic empowerment. Customary law limits access to and control of assets (World Bank, 2015). When women have access to finance, they will be able to carry out entrepreneurial activities and effectively contribute to the economic growth and development of the nation. This will go a long way to ensure social justice, equitable distribution of wealth and improvement in their standard of living (Aguera, 2015).

According to the Global Findex (2021), almost half of the adult population in sub-Saharan Africa still lacks access to formal financial accounts, unfortunately, women are disproportionately impacted by this issue, with only 49 percent of women having access compared to 61 percent of men. This 12 percent gender gap in account ownership is among the highest in the world. Sub-Saharan African countries are characterized by a large number of entrepreneurs especially women. These women entrepreneur contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals. Their business activities are vital for the competitiveness of sub-Saharan African countries such as Cameroon but most of them do not have access to appropriate and affordable financial services (Harelimana, 2017; Kimani, 2016; Eniola & Entebang, 2015; Koech, 2011). Ensuring access to finance for women entrepreneurs is crucial for developing countries like Cameroon, given the important role women play in shaping the next generation, their financial inclusion will lead to greater security and prosperity for women and men, their families, enterprises and communities (World Bank, 2018).

According to FINDEX survey (2014), the CEMAC financial system is highly dominated by Cameroon, but the population of those who own bank accounts is only 12.2% in Cameroon when compared to 29% percent on average in sub-Saharan Africa and it should be noted that, the poorest communities are the least well-served by formal financial institutions. Going by Demirgüç-Kunt & Klapper (2014), only 11% of adults in the Central African sub-region are banked, which is lower than the average of 27% in sub-Saharan Africa in the Southern Africa region.

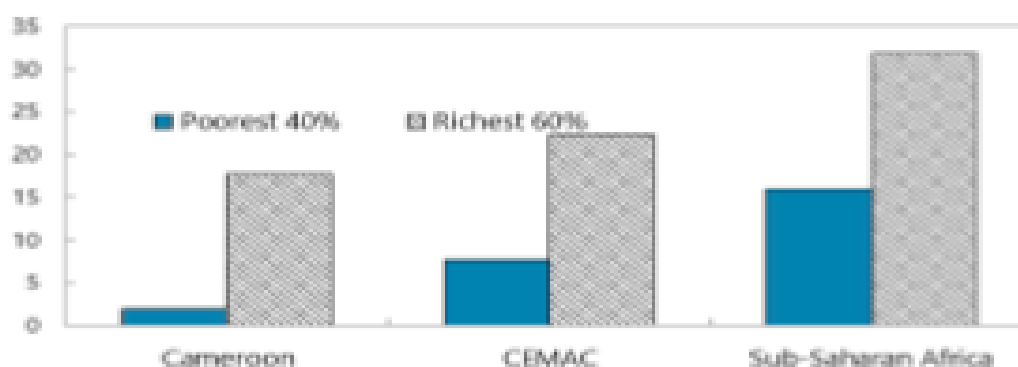


Figure 2. Account Ownership: By Income Level (in percent)

Source: Global FINDEX (2014).

According to Africa Competitive Report (2017), access to finance is reported as the second most problematic factor to doing business after corruption. In addition, the poorest regions are the least well-served by formal financial institutions.

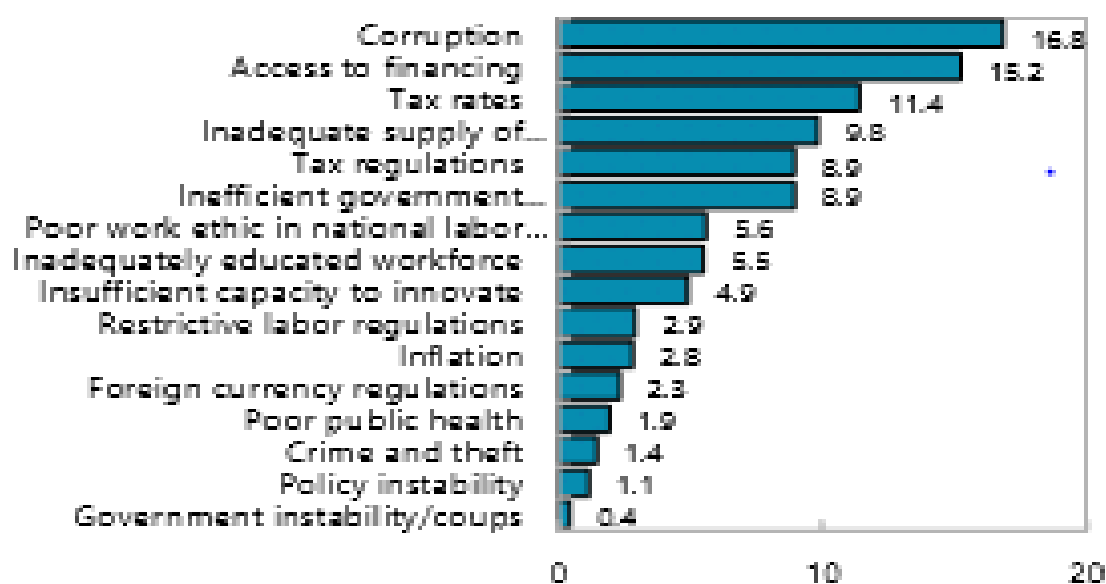


Figure 3. Cameroon: Most Problematic Factors for Doing Business, 2016

Source: Doing Business (2016).

World Bank (2018), only 15% of the adult population in Cameroon has access to formal financial services, such as bank accounts or credit cards. The implication of this is that it affects Cameroonians ability to save, invest and access credit to develop their economic activities. The causes of women financial exclusion in Cameroon are also associated with the low-income level of the population which is also a major barrier to access to financial services. Banks and other financial institutions prefer dealing with rich individuals and large businesses because they are credit-worthy and very profitable for them. Most of these financial institutions are also located in urban areas and this makes access to finance difficult for those in the rural and peri-urban areas. The lack of relevant financial education makes matters worse (Kengne, 2018).

According to IMF (2018), access to finance in Cameroon is low, unevenly distributed, and represents a key impediment to private sector development. Global Findex (2017) data indicates that 20.7% of the adult population have an account at a formal financial institution (bank or MFI) and provides separate data for mobile money accounts. Finscope (2017) uses a slightly different definition, separating the banks from other informal which includes both MFIs and mobile money. In its analysis, overall, 49% of adults are formally financially included. 15% informally financially included and 36% financially excluded as seen in Figure 4 below.

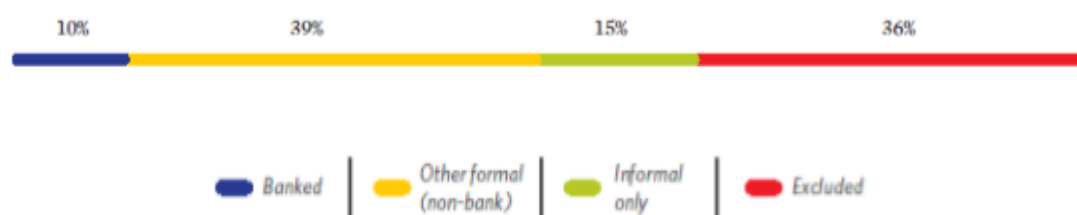


Figure 4. Overall Financial Access Strand

Source: FinScope Cameroon (2017).

Demirguc-Kunt et al. (2018) find out that about 77% of poor people are unbanked and might not have access to appropriate financial services. In addition, the poorest regions are the least well-served by formal financial institutions (FINDEX survey, 2014). This problem is made worse as a result of financial illiteracy in some parts of the population.

The degree of financial inclusion depends on socio-economic conditions. Access to finance varies across gender (Findex survey, 2014). According to a consumer survey conducted in Cameroon by FinScope (2017), access to

finance varies according to gender. An overall, 47% of females are formally financially included. 16% of females informally financially included and 37% of females are financially excluded while 53% of males are formally financially included. 13% of males informally financially included and 34% of males are financially excluded as seen in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5. Access Strand by Gender

Source: FinScope Cameroon (2017).

The emergence of innovations in both products/services and delivery mechanisms, made possible by the mobile revolution, makes financial innovation essential for the effectiveness of financial inclusion if well managed. Financial institutions in Cameroon have started to develop financial products adapted to the needs of the poorest population, such as low-cost savings accounts or microcredits and the development of digital financial services. This has also resulted in the emergence of new players in the financial system, such as mobile payment services, mobile money and fintech companies. These new channels facilitate financial transactions and act as a channel among individuals and businesses through which people and businesses can exchange their knowledge, information, and ideas and facilitate financial transaction (Bongomin et al., 2020). It should be noted that digitalization of the banking and financial sector also has a growing influence in bringing about financial inclusion which cannot also be underestimated (Findex, 2017). But in Cameroon, although mobile money is often seen as a solution for reaching rural populations, the reality is that it is far more widely used by urban populations, mainly owing to poor network coverage in rural areas and the difficulty of establishing agent networks. According to World Bank (2018), only 46% of females in Cameroon uses mobile money while 56% of males uses mobile money. Based on these figures, 84% of both males and females in urban areas uses mobile money while only 16% of both males and females in rural areas uses mobile money. This further buttresses the disparity as seen in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6. Distribution of Mobile Money Users by Gender and Location

Source: Data from World Bank Global Financial Inclusion Database (2018).

Despite, these challenges that affect the functioning of the Cameroonian financial sector, according to IMF (2022), Cameroon is a country with a lot of unexploited potentials. Cameroon has a large, young and vibrant population, a growing economy endowed with natural resources. Some steps are being taken to ensure financial inclusion, to improve the business climate and to achieve the United Nation MDGs. One of the priority objectives listed in the new national development strategy 2020-2030 (NDS30) is to promote financial inclusion. But, looking at the social indicators, Cameroon is still facing a lot of problems with respect to achieving universal basic education, financial inclusion, equitable distribution of income and wealth, poverty and unemployment. According to Business in Cameroon (2024), Cameroon launched its National Financial Sector Development Strategy (NFSDD) on May 31, 2024, and one of the six strategic areas identify is to increased financial inclusion and access to credit for micro, small and medium enterprises. The National Financial Sector Development Strategy aims at providing solutions to the problems identified in a 2022 diagnostic analysis such as limited access to financing for micro and small and medium enterprises, inadequate long-term financing among others.

But, according to the World Bank (2018) on efforts to achieve financial inclusion in Cameroon stated that, Cameroon has been considering developing a financial inclusion strategy but has made little progress. The worldwide association of central banks, in its 2015 report, does not list Cameroon either as a country having a national financial inclusion strategy, nor in the process of developing one. BEAC (2018) Annual Report makes no reference to one.

IMF (2018) has recommended using financial inclusion (FI) strategies and policies to ensure access to financial services for every member of the population especially the vulnerable groups. Financial inclusion aims at encouraging the underprivileged, poor and vulnerable individuals to enjoy appropriate financial services at an affordable price. In addition, financial inclusion is now seen as a policy tool for achieving and fostering many economic objectives such as entrepreneurship, production, economic growth and development (World Bank, 2018). Social capital enhances the activities of social actors and can stimulate entrepreneurial activities which help to improve society's performance. Financial inclusion alone cannot solve the financial problems of entrepreneurs in Cameroon. It needs to be holistic by associating it to financial literacy and social capital in order to get adequate results in ensuring access to financial services and improving the wellbeing of poorer individuals and small businesses. In the absence of easily accessible formal financial services, people turn to informal mechanisms. The most common in Cameroon are the 'tontines' and 'aladi', used by some 50% of the adult population (World Bank, 2018).

Ensuring access to finance is therefore necessary since this will help increase entrepreneurs' abilities to improve the quality of their output, market share (exports) and their financial results (turnover, profit, etc.) through the use of good strategies and relevant actions (Koontz & Donnell, 2003). However, access to finance is a serious challenge to most entrepreneurs in Africa in general (Beck et al., 2015). Financial inclusion has been identified by a number of researchers as what an entrepreneur requires to stay in business (Stephen & Sibert, 2014; Onaolapo & Odetayo, 2012; Beck et al., 2009). Indeed, it enables those enterprises that find it difficult to acquire funds from the traditional banking institutions to have access at a lower cost to a whole range of financial products and services (Tadjudje, 2016; World Bank, 2014; Beck et al., 2015; Sarma, 2008).

Huang (2010) and Andrianova et al. (2011) emphasized the link social capital has with financial inclusion, financial literacy and the importance of financial inclusion in stimulating economic activities. Financial exclusion is still a great problem in the world as statistics indicate that many counties in the world are still far from achieving financial inclusion for all goals by 2030, this can be seen from the World Bank 2017 statistics that 1.7 billion adults in the world are unbanked. The main reason for this is low levels of FI which is also aggravated by the fact that formal financial institutions are not willing to offer financial services to the poor because they think that it is not profitable (Mia et al., 2019). In Cameroon, financial institutions only love to finance large businesses, small entrepreneurs and their businesses are being left out. Low level of financial inclusion is one of the main problems of the Cameroonian banking and financial sector.

Also, financial inclusion and financial literacy have attracted the attention of many researchers but there is still a lack of knowledge and understanding about relevant financial products and services to satisfy entrepreneurs' needs (Owori, 2020). Most efforts to increase financial inclusion have emphasized financial literacy provided through formal education and training without due recognition that people's financial behavior and practices may also be motivated by their social interactions, belongings and interpersonal relationships. According to Mba et al (2019), there is a link between the level of financial inclusion and the level of economic activities, growth and development. This is also reflected in the growth rate of countries. Countries with high financial inclusion levels have a high rate of economic growth and vice versa. However, Ubi & Mba (2019) and Kimani (2016) have established the fact that financial inclusion and financial literacy are very important in enhancing economic activities. Social capital has an impact on saving behavior. Social capital, financial inclusion and financial literacy are topics of contemporary significance and relevant for today's entrepreneurs.

Prete (2013) have also identified the problem of limited financial literacy. Despite the high-rate schooling experience in Manyu Division but the rate of financial inclusion is still low. Also, Beck & Brown (2011) have indicated that the government of Cameroon has done much through the creation of banks and micro finance institutions to ensure that entrepreneurs have access to finance, also the Cameroon finance law of 2022 advocated the imposition of a tax of 15% on the income plus 10% additional municipal centimes (CCA) on any non-profit entity exercising a profitable commercial activity, including tontines. These are all measures aimed at achieving financial inclusion, but this problem continues to persist.

However, despite women's record in shoring up family livelihoods over the past decades, Cameroonian women's full potential has yet to be harnessed because of the challenge in accessing appropriate financing. Women constitute the majority of Cameroonians population living below the poverty line (defined as person earning less than 21000 CFA, less than 20-pound sterling, per annum) (UNDP, 1999). The 1999 Human Resource Development report cited 'gender gaps' between female and Male achievement in the areas of education, economic activities, and access to finance (UNDP, 1999). Mia et al (2019) opine that the state of affairs characterizing the life of women in Manyu has been named with pervasive stereotypes that have labelled women as only homemakers, caring mother's and office housekeepers. This has given the women a new statute and therefore it has created an unfavorable environment for the women and consequently marginalizing them and inhibiting their roles to development. Persistent gender inequality and socio-cultural constraints, exacerbated by humanitarian crises, limit women's and youths' access to basic social services and opportunities.

According to Talom & Tengeh (2019), despite the undeniable importance of financial inclusion, access to finance is still a major challenge in Cameroon. Some steps have been taken to address this situation but there is still much to be done to enable the entire population, especially the vulnerable, to access financial services. However, ongoing initiatives show that there are prospects and that it is possible to solve the problem of access to finance and to promote economic activities in the country.

Financial inclusion and financial literacy have attracted the attention of many researchers but despite the undeniable importance of financial literacy in explaining financial inclusion, to the best of my knowledge many studies have linked financial literacy, social capital and financial inclusion to other economic variables such as entrepreneurship, production, growth etc. However, none has simultaneously linked the three concepts. This makes it problematic and a call for concern especially in the context of Cameroon. The present study is bridging the gap. Also, the mediating role of social capital in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion is still misunderstood and untested. Several studies have been done in areas of financial literacy, social capital and financial inclusion such as (Barry, 2018; Demirguc-Kunt et al., 2015; Mujeri, 2015). Their findings have produced mixed results regarding the effect of financial literacy on financial inclusion and the mediating role of social capital in this relationship. It is at the context of such mixed conclusions that created and necessitated the need to carry out a study from a Cameroon perspective to establish the mediating role of social capital in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs.

1.3 Aim of Study

This study aims at building a framework by linking financial literacy (Pulungan & Ndruru, 2019), social capital (Bongomin et al, 2016) and financial inclusion (IMF, 2018) among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division by examining the extent to which financial literacy affects financial inclusion through social capital mediation among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

1.4 Research Questions

This study intends to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the effect of financial literacy on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division?
- 2) What is the effect of financial literacy on social capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division?
- 3) What is the effect of social capital on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division?
- 4) To what extent does social capital mediate the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To examine the influence of financial literacy on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

- 2) To assess the effect of financial literacy on social capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
- 3) To examine the effect of social capital on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
- 4) To examine the mediating effect of social capital in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives mentioned above, the study assesses the hypotheses as exposed in the table below.

Table 1. Hypotheses

Objective	Stated hypothesis
Objective 1	H ₁ : Financial literacy has a positive significant influence on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
Objective 2	H ₂ : financial literacy has a positive significant effect on Social Capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
Objective 3	H ₃ : Social Capital has a positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
Objective 4	H ₄ : Social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Source: Author (2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Review/Hypotheses Development

2.1.1 The Effects of Financial Literacy on Financial Inclusion

Literature on financial literacy generally supports the notion that higher financial literacy increases financial inclusion (Hsaio & Tsai, 2018; Grohmann, et al., 2018). This view manifests through studies that investigate several constructs or determinants of financial literacy and how they relate to individual financial behavior. Financial knowledge, for instance, influences personal attributes such as attitudes, awareness, and cognitive abilities, which in turn affect how individuals' budget or manage their finances (Atkinson & Messy, 2011: 659). Similarly, enhanced financial knowledge is essential for behavioral change since increased financial literacy training leads to enhanced financial behavior and the greater use of financial services (Sayinzoga, et al., 2016). Conversely, the lack of financial awareness negatively impacts market participation (Guiso & Jappelli, 2005). This underpins the importance of financial literacy on financial inclusion.

There is a vast literature on the level of financial literacy and its role in, and impact on, many factors such as retirement planning, wealth creation and decision-making. For example, Lusardi & Mitchell (2007) claimed that the causes and consequences of financial illiteracy are very important, especially when ensuring access to finance. Their study revealed that, irrespective of age, many people in US are affected from being financially illiterate. They also stated that financial illiteracy was widespread and may have serious impacts on saving behavior, retirement planning and other financial decisions. This situation has encouraged governments and some non-profit organizations to develop significant initiatives to improve the level of financial literacy and understanding of basic economics concepts among people especially entrepreneurs (Amidjono et al., 2016; Arora, 2016). Lusardi & Mitchell (2007) in their study also revealed that lack of financial literacy is widespread among some population subgroups, such as people with lower incomes, less education and women. Those people are more likely to face more difficulties in managing their businesses. Another study by Lusardi & Mitchell (2011) found that people with a high level of financial literacy are more likely to have access to and used of finance and successful entrepreneurial ventures.

Arun & Kamath (2015) observe that besides providing access, financial inclusion should address factors that enable individuals to better manage their financial resources and build financial capabilities. They recognize financial literacy and consumer education as critical drivers of the broader focus on financial exclusion and the meeting of needs of the currently unbanked (Arun & Kamath, 2015). Similarly, strategic approaches at the national level reflect the international policy interest in financial inclusion, financial education, financial consumer protection and evidence that financial literacy and financial inclusion are associated. Issues related to financial literacy and financial inclusion are top in the policy agenda of most countries and international organizations in

the World today since the ultimate intention of financial education is for financial inclusion and to support behavior change (Atkinson & Messy, 2013).

World Bank (2008) stated that financial literacy helps to improve efficiency and quality of financial services. This is supported by Lusardi (2009) and Greenspan (2002) who suggests that financial literacy helps in empowering and educating the poor so that they are knowledgeable and capable of evaluating different financial products and services to make informed financial decisions, so as to derive maximum utility. Therefore, the poor more than ever need a certain level of financial understanding to evaluate and compare financial products, such as bank accounts, saving products, credit and loan options and payment instruments. Scholars like Campbell (2006) and Grable & Joo (1998) argue that financial learning increases financial knowledge and affects financial decisions, choices, attitudes and behaviors of the poor. Indeed, OECD (2013a, 2013b) confirms that financial literacy facilitates access and encourages widening use of relevant financial products and services for the benefit of poor individuals.

Furthermore, Braunstein & Welch (2002) also observed that financial literacy can offer a better understanding of mainstream financial services and encourages the unbanked to avoid non-standard services. Financial literacy facilitates decision making processes, which improve the savings rates, credit worthiness of potential borrowers, therefore resulting in improved access and use of financial services by the poor (World Bank, 2009; OECD, 2009). Therefore, financial literacy facilitates effective product use by helping poor households to develop skills to compare and select the best financial products, which suits their needs hence leading to increased financial inclusion. However, Atkinson & Messy (2013) argue that lack of knowledge, awareness, confidence and certain attitudes and behaviors that inhibit use of, and trust in, formal financial products create barriers to access, by preventing poor individuals from making full use of existing products.

Most of studies highlight the significance of financial literacy on financial inclusion (Barro et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022a; Khan et al., 2022b; Zhao et al., 2024). Tu et al. (2010) suggest that financial literacy is essential for financial resources of a firm. Bongomin et al., (2016) stated that financial literacy can aid in the improvement of the efficiency and quality of financial services. Financial inclusion facilitates access to and encourages the widespread use of financial products and services relevant to poor people's interests. Financial literacy can help the unbanked understand mainstream financial services and encourage them to avoid subpar services.

Financial literacy empowers and educates the public to gain a broader understanding of and evaluate various financial products and services to make informed financial decisions that maximize utility. Financial learning can improve financial knowledge while influencing financial decisions, choices, attitudes, and behavior (Bongomin et al., 2016). Another study states that the higher the knowledge about financial literacy, the higher the knowledge about financial inclusion so that people with high financial literacy can better access existing funding sources. (Nuryani & Israfiani, 2021; Guan, 2020).

According to Rangarajan (2008), financial literacy has levels in the following order: First and foremost, be well-literate. This means that you should be confident in your understanding of financial service organizations and products, including their features, benefits, and hazards, as well as your rights and obligations. You should also be adept at using these goods and services. Second, have sufficient literacy and confidence in their knowledge of financial service providers, financial goods, and services, including their characteristics, advantages, and hazards, as well as their rights and responsibilities. Third, less literate, with a limited understanding of financial services, goods, and institutions. Fourth, lack of literacy, lack of understanding and trust in financial service providers, financial services and products, and a lack of proficiency in using financial services and products. According to the (OECD, 2018), indicators that can be used to measure financial literacy are First, Financial Knowledge. Second, Financial Behavior, and Third, Financial Attitudes. This indicator is used to measure the performance of financial literacy on financial inclusion. The results of Pulungan & Ndruru (2019) demonstrate how financial inclusion is positively and significantly impacted by financial literacy, with higher financial inclusion being associated with higher financial literacy levels. This is in line with research by Grohmann, Klühs, and Menkhoff (2018), which states that there is a positive and significant effect between financial literacy and financial inclusion. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed based on the explanation.

H1: Financial literacy has a positive significant influence on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu division

2.1.2 The Effects of Financial Literacy on Social Capital

Social capital can have a positive impact on educational outcomes and economic development (Bongomin et al., 2016). The source of knowledge and identity brought to the interaction of the society individually and collectively is the source of available social capital (Bongomin et al., 2016). Social capital is the subset of resources used to achieve the desired goal in each specific interaction that contributes to the common goal. Poor households participating in the association network can encourage financial literacy, allowing them to make sound financial decisions and choices (Bongomin et al., 2016).

Putnam (2000) suggests that social capital can positively influence educational outcomes and contribute to economic development. This is supported by Balatti & Falk (2002) who observed that learning process seen in terms of change in knowledge and identity resources depends on social capital in making socio-economic contributions to communities. Indeed, evidence by Cohen & Nelson (2011) revealed that poor households can improve their financial knowledge and skills, which enable them to make wise financial decisions and choices through associational networks. Past studies have investigated the importance of social capital in relations to financial literacy (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Schuller & Field, 1998). Falk & Kilpatrick (2000) observed that social capital available to the participants lies within the knowledge resources and the identity resources that are brought to the interaction by the participants individually and collectively. The subset of these resources used to achieve the desired objective of any specific interaction that contributes to the common purpose constitutes social capital.

In contention, according to Bandura (1986), people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling in social interaction. The social learning theory emphasizes that people learn by observing other people (models) whom they believe are credible and knowledgeable within the social structure. Thus, social capital of relationships is a resource that can facilitate access to other resources by individuals or groups for a specific purpose (Balatti, 2006). The poor learn through social interaction by which they begin to understand and form values, knowledge and attitudes about financial products and services. Interactions by poor households in networks act as conduits for knowledge and information transfer among the poor (Reagans & McEvily, 2003). Thus, Cohen & Nelson (2011) revealed that poor households in associational networks may improve their financial knowledge and skills, which enable them to make wise financial decisions and choices.

People with high financial literacy will be more confident in carrying out social interactions (Khan et al., 2022). The impact of financial literacy on financial inclusion increases when social capital is used as a mediating variable, implying that the impact of financial literacy on financial inclusion is maximized when social capital is used as a mediating variable (Saputra & Dewi, 2017). Based on the explanation, therefore it is hypothesized:

H2: Financial Literacy has a positive significant effect on social capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu division

2.1.3 The Effect of Social Capital on Financial Inclusion

Many studies suggest that social capital and financial inclusion are related and interact. Social capital increases the provision of financial services (Khaki & Sangmi, 2012). Putnam (2000) observed that a social capital interface with access to resources through bonding and bridging results into trust and collective action. Past scholarly work indicates that social capital generates information channels, facilitates transactions and reduces costs in accessing financial services such as credit (van Bastelaer, 2000a, 2000b; Woolcock, 1999).

Indeed, social capital in the form of networks and trust reduces opportunistic behavior among the poor through peer pressure mechanism, which prevents default problems (Karlan, 2007; Armendariz & Morduch, 2005). Additionally, Aryeetey (2005) argued that group lending is a practicable method of microfinance lending since it is acting as a social collateral and ensure the timely repayment of the loan by members of a group. With group lending it is easier for follow-up, monitoring and recovery of the loan. This reduces transaction costs and increases access to financial services among the poor. Most micro finance institutions rely on social capital in their financial inclusion initiatives to extend financial services to the poor. Their successes have greatly relied on network mechanisms, especially to monitor and sanction participants (Karlan, 2003; Woolcock, 1999). Social ties and resulting potential for sanctions between poor household's help mitigate adverse selection and moral hazard problems in joint liability lending contracts. Thus, social capital of the poor in the form of trust and networks, acts as a substitute for lack of physical collateral in order to enable access to financial services (Woolcock, 2001).

Previous research has shown that social capital creates information channels, facilitates transactions, and reduces access to financial services such as credit (Bongomin et al., 2016). Through peer pressure mechanisms, social capital in the form of networks, and trust reduces opportunistic behavior among the poor, preventing problems from occurring. Poor people's social capital informs us that trusts and networks serve as a substitute for the lack of physical guarantees which act as social collateral that allow access to financial services (Bongomin et al., 2016) and by so doing creating access to some financial products and services by all members of the population especially the vulnerable groups and hence financial inclusion. Social capital as a value shared between its members in society allows for cooperation. Social capital will increase financial education and awareness among members of society (Filipek et al., 2019; Nuryani & Israfiani, 2021).

Khan et al. (2022) studied the moderating role of social capital in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion and suggested that financial literacy combined with social capital as moderation will have an impact on financial inclusion. Social capital facilitates financial education in knowledge and skills through network interactions, which is critical for increasing financial inclusion (Saputra & Dewi, 2017). As a driver of financial

literacy, social capital plays an essential role in mediating and enhancing various resources, including knowledge and skills acquired by the community. Financial inclusion can gradually increase if social capital is built as a dimension of values, culture, perceptions, institutions, and mechanisms in positive activities to empower people's perspectives (Pulungan & Ndruru, 2019). Social capital mediates the relationship between social intermediation and access to financial services to some extent (Saputra & Dewi, 2017).

According to Saputra & Dewi (2017), social capital is solidarity owned, self-confidence and facilities for running a business, which comes from social relations involving family, friends, co-workers and others. Social capital refers to networks, norms and trust to facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation (Bongomin et al., 2016). There are 6 main elements of social capital (Widodo, 2016), namely: (1) Participation in a Network, (2) Reciprocity, (3) Trust, (4) Social Norms, (5) Values, and (6) Proactive action. Based on Bongomin et al. (2016), which adopted the World Bank Social Capital Initiative, social capital is measured using dimensions or indicators, namely: (1) Trust, (2) Bonds, (3) Bridging and (4) Collective Action. Meanwhile, based on the results of research by Pulungan & Ndruru, (2019), social capital has a positive and significant effect on financial inclusion because the better the level of trust in financial inclusion, the more development of financial inclusion will increase. This research is also supported by Safira & Dewi (2019), who state that there is a significant relationship between social capital and financial inclusion. Based on the explanation, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2: Social Capital has a positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division

2.1.4 The Mediating Role of Social Capital in the Relationship Between Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion

Previous research has shown that social capital creates information channels, facilitates transactions, and reduces access to financial services such as credit (Bongomin et al., 2016). Through peer pressure mechanisms, social capital in the form of networks, and trust reduces opportunistic behavior among the poor, preventing problems from occurring. Poor people's social capital informs us that trust and networks serve as a substitute for the lack of physical guarantees, that is acting as social collateral that allow access to financial services (Bongomin et al., 2016). Social capital as a value shared between its members in society allows for cooperation. This social capital will make people learn from each other to be able to enjoy existing financial services (Nuryani & Israfiani, 2021; Filipek et al., 2019). Social capital could be a contributing factor to bring about financial inclusion and can also help in ensuring financial literacy.

Going by Khan et al. (2022) states that financial literacy combined with social capital as a mediating variable will have an impact on financial inclusion. Social capital facilitates financial education in knowledge and skills through network interactions, which is critical for increasing literacy and financial inclusion (Saputra & Dewi, 2017). As a driver of financial literacy, social capital plays an essential role in mediating and increasing various resources, including knowledge and skills acquired by the community. Financial literacy and financial inclusion can gradually increase if social capital is built as a dimension of values, culture, perceptions, institutions, and mechanisms in positive activities to empower people's perspectives (Pulungan & Ndruru, 2019). Social capital mediates the relationship between financial literacy and access to financial services to some extent (Saputra & Dewi, 2017). Based on the explanation, the following hypothesis was developed.

H4: Social Capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division

2.1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework linking financial Literacy, Social Capital and Financial Inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division is of relevant to this study because it provides an opportunity to used social capital to mediate the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion in order to give a holistic solution and to encourage women entrepreneurship. These variables are positioned in the conceptual framework shown below:

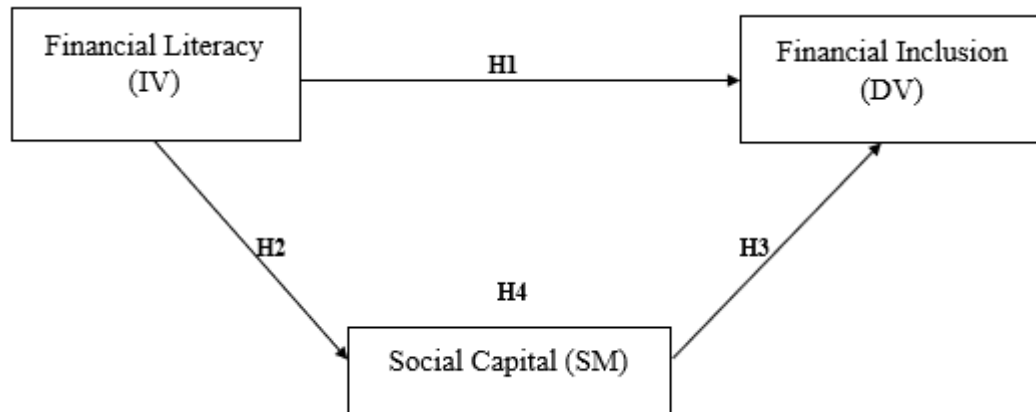


Figure 7. Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2024).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach Used in This Study

Process	Purpose	Logic	Outcome
Quantitative	RO1: RO2: RO3, and RO4: Predictive	Deductive	Applied Research

Source: Author (2024).

A quantitative research approach was chosen because it can be used to predict the influence of social capital on financial literacy and financial inclusion. It was considered a useful approach to link these three variables among women entrepreneurs in Manyu. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design and quantitative method. The primary survey conducted enabled the researcher to obtain facts and answers from the population at one specific point in time which increased the validity and generalizability of findings. A cross-sectional research design was used because it allows collecting data from the population over a shorter period. It is even the cheapest and less time-consuming research design than others, easily collects data, and excludes the recurring mistakes which were common in longitudinal research design (Bongomin et al., 2016). This study will use the deductive approach. The relationship will be tested. The hypotheses developed all aligned with the concept of social capital, financial inclusion and financial literacy.

The target population are women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. The population for this study was drawn from the four subdivisions namely Upper Banyang, Akwaya, Mamfe Cenral and Eyumojock.

Table 2. Location of respondents in Manyu Division

Subdivision	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Mamfe Central	101	21.7	21.7
Upper Banyang	149	32.0	53.6
Eyumojock	118	25.3	79.0
Akwaya	98	21.0	100.0
Total	466	100.0	-

Source: Author (2024).

Sampling frame is an enumeration of all objects or individuals under a particular study. Data was collected from women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. They comprised 46 women entrepreneurs involve in technology sector, 334 in retail businesses, 57 in hospitality, 21 in health care, 6 in manufacturing and 2 in the service sector.

Table 3. Main industry of respondents' business

Different business categories	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Technology	46	9.9	9.9
Retail	334	71.7	81.5
Hospitality	57	12.2	93.8
Health Care	21	4.5	98.3
Manufacturing	6	1.3	99.6
Service	2	.4	100
Total	466	100.0	-

Source: Author (2024).

The study made use of the following sampling technique. Stratified sampling techniques to sample the region by dividing Manyu division into subgroups called subdivisions. Purposive sampling technique by using the women entrepreneurs who can provide valuable insight into the research questions because of their line of business activities which is related to aim of the study. The distribution of the questionnaires was based on a convenience sampling and a snowball sampling or chain-referral sampling.

3.1.1 Sample Size Calculation

Applying the Yamane (1967) sample size formular:
$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$
 . Where: n= sample size of population, N= Total sample population (from the Ministry of SMEs in Mamfe, N= 1500 women entrepreneurs) and e= Standard error (mathematically assumed to be 5% (0.05)).

$$\text{Thus; } n = \frac{1500}{1 + (1500)0.05^2} = \frac{1500}{4.75} = 315.789$$

Hence, the minimum sample size according to Yamane technique is equivalent to 316 respondents. However, for robustness, we targeted a total of 466 women entrepreneurs in Manyu division. Thus, 466 questionnaires were administered to 466 women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division which is greater than the approve sample size of 316 individual as per our scientific calculation.

A pilot study was conducted using a group of 10 participants to assess the instrument's reliability. The details of the pilot test are provided on Table 4.

Table 4. Pilot test details

Activity	Description
Pilot test respondents	10 women entrepreneurs
Place	Manyu Division, Cameroon
Date	1–20 March 2024

Source: Author (2024).

The questionnaire's reliability was determined via test–retest and Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculations to evaluate all of the items. All questionnaire items had Cronbach's alpha coefficient of at least .787.

Operationalization of Variables

Variables	Indicators	Source
Financial Literacy (FL)	Independent Variable (IV)	1. Financial Knowledge
		OECD, (2018)

		2. Financial Behavior 3. Financial Attitudes 4. Financial Skills	Pulungan & Ndruru, (2019)
Social Capital (SC)	Mediating Variable (MV)	1. Collection Action 2. Bonding 3. Bridging 4. Trust	Bongomin, et al., (2016) Saputra & Dewi, (2017)
Financial Inclusion (FI)	Dependent Variable (DV)	1. Access 2. Usage 3. Quality 4. Welfare	OECD, (2018) Pulungan & Ndruru, (2019)

Sources: Author (2024).

3.1.1.1 Model Specification

The model specification aligned with the hypotheses. The statistical model displayed below aims to link financial literacy, social capital and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu division. In other words, we established a chain of influences where social capital influences financial literacy, and social capital also influences financial inclusion. The ordinary least square technique was used to test each of the first three objectives. In testing for mediation, which is the fourth objective, the following steps are used.

Model specification for objective One, Two and Three

The econometric model applied in this study particularly objective one, two and three is:

$$FI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FL_i + \beta_n \chi_n + \varepsilon_{1i} \quad (1)$$

$$SC_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FL_i + \beta_n \chi_n + \varepsilon_{1i} \quad (2)$$

$$FI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SC_i + \beta_n \chi_n + \varepsilon_{1i} \quad (3)$$

Where: FI is financial inclusion and it's the main independent variable or variable of interest in equation 1 and

3, SC is Social capital which is the variable of interest in equation 2, FL is financial literacy, which is the

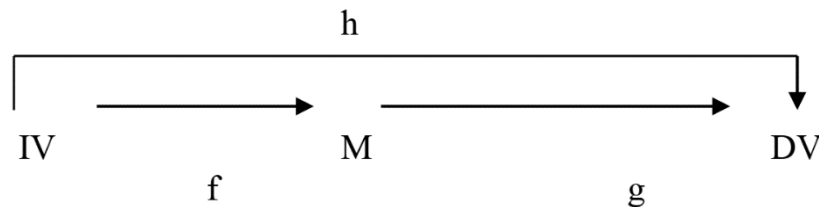
main independent variable. χ_n represent other exogenous characteristics affecting financial inclusion and social capital in equation 1 and 2. These complementary variables are: level of education (1= Higher, 0 otherwise), nature of business (1= retail, 0 otherwise), marital status (1= married, 0 otherwise), age group (1 = 22 years to 29 years, 0 otherwise), experience (1 = 2 years to 5 years, 0 otherwise) and range of business profit (1= 100k_200, 0 otherwise) and ε_i is the error term.

Equation (1) deals with the effect of financial literacy on financial inclusion, equation (2) presents the effects of financial literacy on social capital while equation (3) captures the influence of social capital on financial inclusion. Considering that the dependent variables (Financial inclusion and social capital) and main independent variable (financial literacy) are all captured by multiple questions, this study made use of the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) to create an index for each of them respectively. It's this index that is used to estimate the result. The use of MCA to create an indicator was already universally accepted since 1998 by the World Bank group (World Bank, 2020). In this technique, the F-test was used to determine the significance of the regression while the coefficient of determination (R^2), was used to determine how much variation in social capital is explained by the independent variables. This was done at 99%, 95% and 90% confidence level respectively and the estimation was carried out to find the direction of the relationship between financial inclusion, social capital and independent

variables. The econometric technique applied here is the OLS regression estimation technique.

3.1.2 Testing for Mediation Objective Four

In order to test the mediation effect of self-efficacy, Baron & Kenny (1986) four-step regression method was used. A regression analysis was carried out and significance of the coefficients tested. Using an illustration, mediation can be depicted in the following way:



Where IV is the independent variable, M is the mediating variable, DV is the dependent variable. The paths (coefficients) are denoted by f, g and h. A summary of the four steps are presented on Table 5 below.

A summary of the four-step approach of testing for mediation.

Table 5. Model specification for Testing of mediation

Analysis model	Visual Depiction
Step 1 A simple regression analysis with financial literacy (IV) predicting financial inclusion (DV) to test for path h alone, financial inclusion = $\alpha + \beta \text{financial literacy} + \varepsilon$	H
Step 2 A simple regression analysis with X predicting M to test for path f, social capital = $\alpha + \beta \text{financial literacy} + \varepsilon$	
Step 3 A simple regression analysis with M predicting Y to test the significance of path g alone, financial inclusion = $\alpha + \beta \text{social capital} + \varepsilon$	
Step 4 A multiple regression analysis with X and M predicting Y to test paths h and g respectively, financial inclusion = $\alpha + \beta_1 \text{financial literacy} + \beta_2 \text{social capital} + \varepsilon$	H

Source: Adopted from Baron & Kenny (1986).

In the table above, the purpose of steps 1 – 3 was to establish that zero-order relationships among the variables exist. This analysis will help us to conclude whether mediation is possible or not. A significant relationship from steps 1 – 3, led to step 4. Step 4 model was necessary to ascertain if a full or partial mediation occurred.

3.2 Measurement of Variables

Table 6. Measurement of Variables

Variables	Measurement
Dependent variable	Financial inclusion indicator
Mediating Variable	Social Capital indicator
Independent variable	Financial Literacy indicator
Independent Variables	
Level of Education	1= higher, 0 otherwise
Nature of business	1 = Retail, 0 otherwise
Marital status	1= married, 0 otherwise
Age of entrepreneur	1= 39 years to 49 years, 0 otherwise
Entrepreneur experience	1= between 2 years – 5 years, 0 Otherwise
Entrepreneurs Profit	1= 100,000fcfa – 200,000fcfa, 0 Otherwise

Source: Author (2024).

The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and the study used both simple linear regression and multiple regression analysis with the SPSS and AMOS version 25 and 24 respectively. The major statistical tools used to assess the hypothetical model in this work are SPSS and AMOS, which are considered as second-generation data analysis technique that is sophisticated and widely used to test complex hypotheses using data collected (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Since this study has to do with testing for mediation, it is appropriate to use both SPSS and AMOS version 25 and 24 respectively. These are tools that allows researchers to be able to model relationships among multiple variables simultaneously to answer certain research questions. AMOS is an add-on for SPSS. Structural Equation Modeling is only possible with AMOS

4. Presentation Findings

The necessary data was cleaned and all necessary procedure respected.

Combined Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variables	Retained Indicators	Rejected Indicators
Financial Inclusion	FI4, FI5, FI7, FI9, FI12, FI16	FI1, FI2, FI3, FI6, FI8, FI10, FI11, FI13, FI14, FI15
Financial Literacy	FL2, FL4, FL9, FL10	FL1, FL3, FL5, FL6, FL7 FL8, FL11, FL12, F13, F14, F15
Social Capital	SC4, SC7, SC10, SC13	SC1, SC2, SC3, SC5, SC6, SC8, SC9, SC11, SC12, SC14

Source: Author (2024).

Validity and Reliability Test

Indicators	Factor Loading	Average Factor Loading	AVE	α – Cronbach Test
FI4	,635	0,737	0,5245	0.733
FI5	,715			
FI7	,749			
FI9	,655			
FI12	,562			
FI16	,785			
FL2	,880	0,794683	0,6317	0.732
FL4	,780			
FL9	,809			
FL10	,774			

SC4	,825	0,7839	0,568533	0.743
SC7	,717			
SC10	,683			
SC13	,652			

Source: Author (2024).

The data presented shows the factor loadings, average factor loadings, AVE (Average Variance Extracted), and Cronbach's Alpha (α) for three constructs: Financial Inclusion (FI), Financial Literacy (FL), and Social Capital (SC). Examining the convergent validity, the factor loadings for most indicators are above the recommended 0.70 threshold, indicating strong convergent validity. However, the average factor loadings for FI (0.737) and SC (0.7839) are greater than the 0.70 threshold, suggesting these constructs may fully explain the variance in their respective indicators. The AVE values provide further insight, with FI (0.5245) and SC (0.568533) which is above the 0.50 recommended level, again indicating that convergent validity is achieved. Turning to reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all three constructs (FI: 0.733, FL: 0.732, SC: 0.743) are greater than the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, suggesting good internal consistency reliability. This implies that the items within each construct may be measuring the same underlying construct reliably.

Overall, based on the results of the validity test, it is known that the 'r' count of each indicator on financial literacy, social capital and financial inclusion is all greater than the 'r' table with a degree of freedom of 98 (100-2) in SPSS version 25, the results show that all research questions declared valid for primary data collection for this study. Meanwhile, the results of the reliability test on the indicators for all variables show the results of Cronbach's Alpha test is slightly > 0.70 , which means that there were some questions asked in the questionnaire that capture the indicators of this research and are declared reliable. After the quality of the questions is declared valid and reliable, the next test is the classical assumption test. To further improve the psychometric properties of the measures, the researcher may want to consider revising or removing problematic indicators, collecting additional data, and potentially adding more indicators to each construct to enhance the reliability of the scales.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a statistical technique used to test the validity of a hypothesized factor structure (Kline, 2015). It is a type of structural equation modeling (SEM) that allows researchers to assess the extent to which the observed data fit a predetermined factor model (Byrne, 2012). In CFA, the researcher specifies the number of factors, the pattern of indicator-factor loadings, factor correlations, and error variances based on prior theory, empirical research, or both (Hoyle, 2012). The primary goal of CFA is to determine the extent to which the data supports the proposed factor structure, which can provide evidence for the construct validity of the measures used in the study (Brown, 2015). CFA is often used to confirm the factor structure of established measures, examine the dimensionality of a construct, and investigate the relationships between latent variables (Kline, 2015).

CFA Measurement Threshold

All the measurement scales were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based on the following threshold: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), GFI, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) ≥ 0.9 $\chi^2/df \leq 3.0$, Standardized root mean Squared Residual (SRMR) ≤ 0.08 and root mean Square error of Approximation (RMSEA) ≤ 0.06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

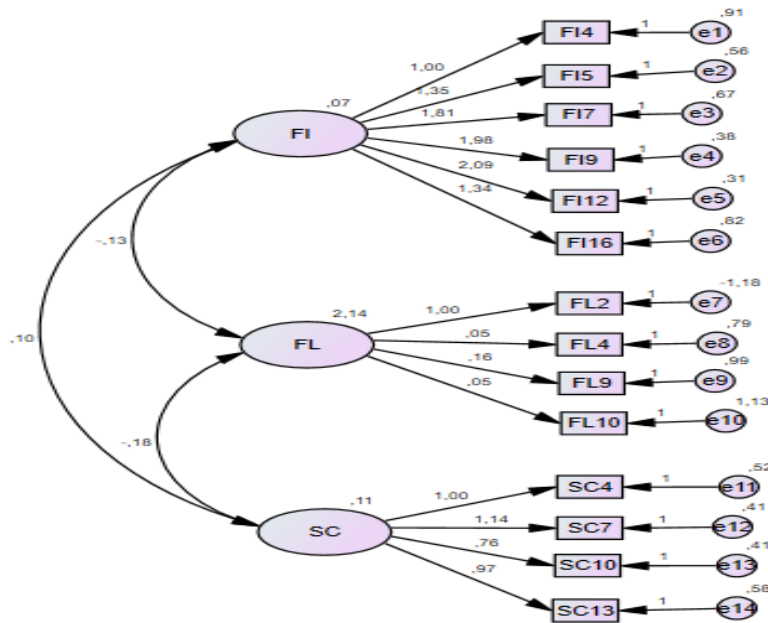


Figure 8. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Source: Author (2024).

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	31	586,377	74	,000	7,924
Saturated model	105	,000	0		
Independence model	14	1423,705	91	,000	15,645

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	,588	,494	,620	,527	,616
Saturated model	1,000		1,000		1,000
Independence model	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	,122	,113	,131	,000
Independence model	,177	,169	,186	,000

From the above, it shows Comparative Fit Index (CFI) $0.616 < 0.9$, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) $0.620 < 0.9$, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) $0.527 < 0.9$, χ^2/df $7.924 > 3.0$, P value $0.000 < 0.05$ and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) $0.122 > 0.06$. This does not meet the criteria for a model fit, as such a structural equation model cannot be fully tested.

The relevant Parametric statistical tests key assumptions were satisfied to ensure the validity and reliability of the results.

Multicollinearity Test

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Financial_Literacy	,991	1,009

	Social_Capital	,991	1,009
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Source: Author (2024).

The tolerance values for both Financial Literacy and Social Capital are 0.991, well above the commonly used threshold of 0.20, indicating that the predictor variables are not highly correlated with each other. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for both variables are 1.009, which are far below the typical multicollinearity concern level of 5 or 10. These results strongly suggest that multicollinearity is not a problem in the regression model used to examine the relationship between the key constructs of Financial Literacy, Social Capital, and Financial Inclusion. This is an important finding, as the absence of multicollinearity ensures that the individual effects of the predictor variables can be reliably estimated and interpreted in the subsequent mediation analysis. The robust multicollinearity test, therefore, bolsters the validity and trustworthiness of the overall study's conclusions regarding the complex interplay between these critical factors influencing financial inclusion among the women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Main Results of Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion in Manyu

Following Table 7, the result shows that financial literacy is strongly corroborating with financial inclusion at one percent level and with a magnitude effect of 38.28%. The results of the regression analysis of the relationship between various factors of financial literacy and their effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs reveal critical insights into the factors influencing financial inclusion. Based on 466 observations, the coefficients, standard errors, significance levels, and confidence intervals for each variable are presented, offering insights into their contributions to the overall model.

One of the most noteworthy findings is the strong positive relationship between the financial literacy indicator (FL-indicator) and financial inclusion, with a coefficient of 0.3828 that is statistically significant (p -value < 0.001). This implies that higher levels of financial literacy are associated with increased financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs. In contrast, higher education appears to have no significant effect, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.2212 and a p -value of 0.357. This result suggests that simply obtaining higher education may not directly translate into better financial literacy or financial inclusion.

Table 7. Main Results of Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	T	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
Financial Literacy	.3828449	.0511945	7.48	0.000	[.4834502 .6822397]
Higher education	.2212403	.2400344	0.92	0.357	[-.2504651 .6929456]
Retail Business	.4625486	.0990458	4.67	0.000	[.6571891 .767908]
Married Entrepreneur	.1637868	.089501	1.83	0.080	[-.0659849 .2857821]
39 years to 49 years	-.1323131	.1303187	-1.02	0.310	[-.3884098 .1237835]
2 to 5 years experience	.0844618	.1096665	0.77	0.442	[-.1310501 .2999737]
100,000 – 200,000f rs Profits	-.31763	.1855206	1.71	0.088	[-.6822071 .0469471]
Constant	.2650907	.1097543	2.42	0.016	[.0494062 .4807752]
R-squared	0.7556				
Adj R-squared	0.7427				
Root MSE	0 .92692				
F- Statistics test	12.05 [0.0000]				
Number of obs	466				

Source: Author field Survey (2024).

The involvement in retail businesses shows a significant positive effect on financial inclusion, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.4625 (p -value < 0.001). This suggests that women entrepreneurs engaged in retail may face barriers that hinder their financial inclusion. The variable representing married women as a coefficient of 0.1638 and is marginally significant (p =0.080), marital status variable does not appear to have a significant effect, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.0394 suggesting that being married may contribute positively since married women may learn from their spouse in this context although further investigation is needed to draw firm conclusion.

Other variables, such as age (39 to 49 years) and work experience (2 to 5 years), were not found to have significant effect, with p-values of 0.310 and 0.442 respectively. This indicates that these factors do not substantially influence the outcome measure in this study. Lastly, the variable related to profit levels between 100,000 and 200,000FCFA shows a marginally significant negative impact on financial inclusion, with a coefficient of -0.3176 and a p-value of 0.088 suggesting that higher profit might be linked to lower financial inclusion, which requires further investigation.

The model demonstrates a strong fit, with an R-square value of 0.7556. The R-squared value indicates that approximately 75.56% of the variability observed in the target variable financial inclusion is explained by the predictor included in the regression model. Also looking at the value of the adjusted R-squared of 0.7427, it shows that a greater proportion of the variance of financial inclusion can be explained by financial literacy which confirms that the model remains robust even when accounting for the number of predictors. Additionally, the root mean square error 0.9269 reflects the average distance that the observed values deviate from the regression line. The F-value is greater than the critical value, this suggests that the overall model is significant as indicated by an F-statistics of 12.05 ($p < 0.0000$). This suggests that the variables included in the model collectively have a meaningful impact on financial inclusion and at least one predictor variable has a non-zero coefficient.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that financial literacy and engagement in retail business are key drivers of financial inclusion. While higher education and work experience did not show significant effect. The findings regarding married women entrepreneurs and profit levels highlights areas for further research. Overall, the model exhibits strong explanatory power, underscoring the importance of financial literacy in fostering financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs.

Main Result of Financial Literacy and Social Capital in Manyu

The result of Table 8 shows that financial literacy is strongly correlated with social capital and the result is significant at 1 percent level. This simply means that the more the attitude, knowledge and skills of women entrepreneur's increases, the greater she involves in financial killings. This result has a magnitude effect of about 22.31 percent. Thus, the more financial literacy improves, the more the women entrepreneurs increase the probability of augmenting their access, quality, usage, and welfare in financial dealings (see Table 8).

Table 8. Main Results of Financial Literacy and Social Capital in Manyu

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	T	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
Financial Literacy	.2231882	.0395107	5.65	0.000	[.1455434 .300833]
Higher education	.537601	.2152601	2.50	0.013	[.114581 .960621]
Retail Business	.3245593	.0893063	3.63	0.000	[.1490583 .5000603]
Married Entrepreneur	-.0788409	.080306	0.98	0.327	[-.2366549 .078973]
39 years to 49 years	-.0850116	.0833159	1.02	0.308	[-.2487405 .0787172]
2 to 5 years experience	.97756	.0846051	11.55	0.000	[1.143822 .8112978]
100,000 – 200,000f rs Profits	.4443523	.1617179	2.75	0.006	[.1265513 .7621533]
Constant	.1141528	.1022134	1.12	0.265	[-.0867126 .3150182]
R-squared	0.7563				
Adj R-squared	0.3118				
Root MSE	0.83046				
F- Statistics test	12.05 [0.0000]				
Number of obs	466				

Source: Author field Survey (2024).

The variables complementing financial literacy in influencing social capital are women entrepreneurs attained higher education, entrepreneurs are more in retail business, women entrepreneurs having 2 to 5 years' experience and women of business profit ranging between 100,000 – 200,000f rs per week of sales.

The F-statistics of 12.05 [0.0000] revealed that overall the result is globally good while the relationship between each variable to the dependent variable is equally good as confirmed by the R-squared result of 75.63%.

Main Results of Social Capital and Financial Inclusion in Manyu

Table 9. Main Results of Social Capital and Financial Inclusion in Manyu

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	T	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
Social Capital	.2918271	.0516618	5.65	0.000	[-.1903035 .3933506]
Higher education	.064474	.2477969	0.26	0.795	[-.4224859 .5514339]
Retail Business	.4503741	.1014213	4.44	0.000	[-.6496829 .2510652]
Married Entrepreneur	.1063541	.0917902	1.16	0.247	[-.074028 .2867362]
22 years to 29 years	.0347334	.0953642	0.36	0.716	[-.1526722 .2221389]
2 to 5 years experience	-.0408014	.109927	0.37	0.711	[-.2568252 .1752225]
100,000 – 200,000f rs Profits	.3274295	.1858096	1.76	0.079	[-.6925746 .0377156]
Constant	.2763002	.1163234	2.38	0.018	[-.0477065 .5048939]
R-squared	0.7137				
Adj R-squared	0.5002				
Root MSE	0.94961				
F- Statistics test	8.40 [0.0000]				
Number of obs	466				

Source: Author field Survey (2024).

The results of the regression analysis of the relationship between various factors of social capital and their effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs reveal critical insights into the factors influencing financial inclusion. Based on 466 observations, the coefficients, standard errors, significance levels, and confidence intervals for each variable are presented, offering insights into their contributions to the overall model.

One of the most noteworthy findings is the strong positive relationship between the social capital indicator (SL indicator) and financial inclusion, with a coefficient of 0.3828 that is statistically significant (p-value of less than 0.001). This implies that higher levels of social capital are associated with increased financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs. In contrast, higher education appears to have no significant effect, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.064474 and a p-value of 0.795. This result suggests that simply obtaining higher education may not directly translate into better financial literacy or financial inclusion.

The involvement in retail businesses shows a significant positive effect on financial inclusion, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.45037 (p-value < 0.001). This suggests that women entrepreneurs engaged in retail may face barriers that hinder their financial inclusion. The variable representing married women as a coefficient of 0.10635 and is marginally significant (p=0.247), marital status variable appears to have a significant effect, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.10635 suggesting that being married may contribute positively since married women may learn from their spouse in this context although further investigation is needed to draw firm conclusion.

Other variables, such as age (39 to 49 years) and work experience (2 to 5 years), were not found to have significant effect, with p-values of 0.716 and 0.711, respectively. This indicates that these factors do not substantially influence the outcome measure in this study. Lastly, the variable related to profit levels between 100, 000 and 200,000FCFA has a coefficient of .03274 does not significantly affect financial inclusion, with a coefficient of 0.3274 and a p-value of 0.079. suggesting that higher profit might be not be link to lower financial inclusion, which requires further investigation.

The model demonstrates a strong fit, with an R-square value of 0.7137. The R-squared value indicates that approximately 71.13% of the variability observed in the target variable financial inclusion is explained by the predictor included in the regression model. Also looking at the value of the adjusted R-squared of 0.5002, it shows that a greater proportion of the variance of financial inclusion can be explained by social capital which confirms that the model remains robust even when accounting for the number of predictors. Additionally, the root mean square error 0.9496 reflects the average distance that the observe values deviate from the regression line. The F-value is greater than the critical value, this suggests that the overall model is significant as indicated by an F-statistics of 8.40 (p<0.0000). This suggests that the variables included in the model collectively have a meaningful impact on financial inclusion and at least one predictor variable has a non -zero coefficient.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that social capital and engagement in retail business are key drivers of financial inclusion. While higher education and work experience did not show significant effect. The findings regarding married women entrepreneurs and profit levels highlights areas for further research. Overall, the model exhibits

strong explanatory power, underscoring the importance of social capital and entrepreneurship in fostering financial inclusion.

Results of mediating effect of social capital on the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs

Mediation test was carried out to determine the mediation effect of social capital on the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion for hypothesis four (H4). The steps used to test mediation are discussed below.

Step One: Establish the direct relationship

Here, the researcher conducts a regression analysis with Financial Literacy (X) as the independent variable and Financial Inclusion (Y) as the dependent variable. The data provided indicates that the direct effect of Financial Literacy on Financial Inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division is statistically significant.

The regression analysis shows a negative coefficient of -0.116 for the relationship between Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion, with a t-statistic of -2.888 and a p-value of 0.004. This means that higher levels of financial literacy are associated with lower levels of financial inclusion in this population, and this relationship is significant at the 5% level. The significance of this direct effect is an important finding, as it establishes that there is an effect that can potentially be explained or accounted for by the proposed mediator variable, Social Capital. This sets the stage for the next steps in mediation analysis to determine the extent to which Social Capital mediates the relationship between Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion.

Table 10. Step One: Establish the direct relationship

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3,794	,141		26,887	,000
Financial_Literacy	-,116	,040	-,133	-2,888	,004

a. Dependent Variable: Financial Inclusion

Source: Author (2024).

Step Two: Establish the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator

The researcher conducted a regression analysis with Financial Literacy (X) as the independent variable and Social Capital (M) as the mediator variable.

Table 11. Step Two: Establish the relationship between the independent variable and the mediator

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	4,413	,128		34,454	,000
Financial_Literacy	-,074	,036	-,095	-2,045	,041

a. Dependent Variable: Social_Capital

Source: Author (2024).

The analysis of the relationship between Financial Literacy (X) and Social Capital (M) reveals a statistically significant inverse relationship. The regression coefficient of -0.074 indicates that as financial literacy increases, social capital decreases among the women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. This finding suggests that there may be a tradeoff or tension between these two factors, rather than a purely positive correlation. The significant p-value of 0.041 confirms that this relationship is not merely a chance occurrence, but rather a meaningful and substantive finding. This result is an important component in understanding the full mediation model, as it sheds light on the complex interplay between financial literacy, social capital, and their collective influence on financial inclusion within the target population. Recognizing this nuanced relationship is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies that can foster both financial literacy and social capital to promote financial inclusion effectively.

Step Three: Establish the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable

The researcher conducted a regression analysis with Social Capital (M) as the independent variable and Financial Inclusion (Y) as the dependent variable.

Table 12. Step Three: The relationship between the mediator and Financial Inclusion

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	,545	,169		3,229	,001
Social_Capital	,685	,040	,619	16,997	,000
a. Dependent Variable: Financial_Inclusion					

Source: Author (2024).

The data provided indicates that the relationship between Social Capital and Financial Inclusion is statistically significant among the women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. The regression analysis shows a positive coefficient of 0.685 for this relationship, with a t-statistic of 16.997 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that higher levels of social capital are associated with higher levels of financial inclusion, and this relationship is significant at the 5% level. The strong statistical significance of this finding is an important part of the overall mediation analysis, as it suggests that social capital may play a key role in explaining or accounting for the direct relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion. This lays the groundwork for further examination of the mediating effect of social capital on the link between these two primary variables of interest.

Step Four: Test for mediation

The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis with both Financial Literacy (X) and Social Capital (M) as predictors of Financial Inclusion (Y).

Table 13. Step Four: Test for mediation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	,804	,210		3,825	,000
Social_Capital	,678	,040	,612	16,785	,000
Financial_Literacy	-,065	,032	-,075	-2,056	,040
a. Dependent Variable: Financial Inclusion					

Source: Author (2024).

When Social Capital (M) is included in the model, the effect of Financial Literacy (X) on Financial Inclusion (Y) is reduced in magnitude compared to the direct effect reported earlier ($B = -0.116$, Sig. = 0.004). However, the effect of Financial Literacy (X) on Financial Inclusion (Y) is still statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.040.

Based on these findings, we can conclude that the relationship between Financial Literacy (X) and Financial Inclusion (Y) exhibits partial mediation by Social Capital (M). The reduction in the magnitude of the effect, along with the remaining statistical significance, suggests that Social Capital partially explains or accounts for the relationship between Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion. In other words, some of the effects of Financial Literacy on Financial Inclusion is mediated by Social Capital, but there is also a direct effect that is not fully explained by the mediator.

This partial mediation finding is an important result, as it provides insights into the complex interplay between the three variables and the mechanisms underlying the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among the women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Step Five: Assess the significance of the indirect effect:

To formally test the indirect effect of Financial Literacy (X) on Financial Inclusion (Y) through the mediator Social Capital (M), this research used the Preacher and Hayes approach.

Step 1: Obtain the necessary coefficients and standard errors from the regression models.

From the previous information provided:

a (the effect of X on M): $B = -0.116$, $SE = 0.040$

b (the effect of M on Y): $B = 0.678$, $SE = 0.040$

Step 2: Calculate the indirect effect and its standard error using the Preacher and Hayes formulas.

Indirect effect = $a * b = -0.116 * 0.678 = -0.0786$

Standard error of the indirect effect = $\sqrt{(b^2 * SE_a^2) + (a^2 * SE_b^2) + (SE_a^2 * SE_b^2)}$

= $\sqrt{[(0.678^2 * 0.040^2) + (-0.116^2 * 0.040^2) + (0.040^2 * 0.040^2)]}$

= 0.0232

Step 3: Conduct the significance test for the indirect effect.

The Preacher and Hayes approach uses a bias-corrected bootstrapping method to obtain a confidence interval for the indirect effect.

Using a bootstrap sample of 5,000 and a 95% confidence level, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect is:

Lower limit: -0.1242

Upper limit: -0.0336

Since the confidence interval does not include zero, we can conclude that the indirect effect of Financial Literacy (X) on Financial Inclusion (Y) through Social Capital (M) is statistically significant.

In summary, the formal test using the Preacher and Hayes approach confirms that the indirect effect is statistically significant, indicating that Social Capital partially mediates the relationship between Financial Literacy and Financial Inclusion among the women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Table 14. Harmonized Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	P-Value at 95% (CI)	Decision / Conclusion
H₁: Financial literacy has a strong positive significant influence on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division	$[H_0: \mu = 0.000 < 0.05, \beta = 0.38, CI = 95\%]$. Strong positive statistically significant.	Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that financial literacy has a positive significant influence on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
H₂: Financial literacy has a strong positive significant effect on Social Capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division	$[H_0: \mu = 0.000 < 0.05, \beta = 0.22, CI = 95\%]$. Strong positive statistically significant.	Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that financial literacy has a positive significant effect on Social Capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
H₃: Social Capital has a strong positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division	$[H_0: \mu = 0.000 < 0.05, \beta = 0.29, CI = 95\%]$. Strong positive statistically significant.	Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Social Capital has a positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.
H₄: Social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division	$[H_0: \mu = 0.000 < 0.05, \beta = 0.804, CI = 95\%]$. Weak positive statistically significant.	Reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Source: Author (2024).

This section was concerned with analysis and interpretation of data. Missing data was handled before Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis were done. Outlier were identified and removed. Parametric test was carried out after which Structural Equation Model (SEM), hierarchical regression and mediation analysis using SPSS and Amos software. Inferential statistics via the hierarchical regression was used to test the hypothesis of the study. All four hypotheses were supported and their null hypotheses rejected.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings were discussed with respect to the four hypotheses stated at the initial phase of the research.

Hypothesis one is “financial literacy has a positive significant influence on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. Hypothesis two is “financial literacy has a positive significant effect on Social Capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division”. Hypothesis three is “Social Capital has a positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division”. Hypothesis four is “social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division”. The discussion of the findings is presented as follows:

Financial literacy has a positive significant influence on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division

Results from the analysis conducted indicated that hypothesis one (H1) is supported. There exist a significant and positive relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneur in Manyu Division. This, therefore, implies that financial literacy affects financial inclusion among women entrepreneur in Manyu Division. It can be concluded that the higher a person’s financial literacy in terms of financial knowledge, financial behavior and financial attitudes and skills, the higher the level of financial inclusion. A woman entrepreneur with high financial literacy will be able to make appropriate decisions about the products and services they use, plan their finances more effectively, steer clear of investing in dubious financial instruments, and comprehend the advantages and disadvantages of various financial offerings.

This is in line with the research of Pulungan & Ndruru (2019), financial literacy has a positive and significant effect on financial inclusion, so the better the level of financial literacy, the higher financial inclusion. This is also in line with research (Grohmann et al., 2018), which states that there are positive and significant results in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion. But don’t forget that the effect can also be the opposite; that is, the lower the level of financial literacy, the lower the financial inclusion that can be utilized. This effect is also positive.

This means that the women entrepreneur in Manyu Division have the accurate ability to determine the benefits of transactions (skills) and can take advantage of financial products/services; therefore, respondents (knowledge) also agree that the products/services provided by securities companies can increase income, increase access to utilities, and increase access to facilities (welfare). Financial literacy empowers and educates the public to gain a broader understanding of and evaluate various financial products and services to make informed financial decisions that maximize utility (Bongomin et al., 2016; Lusardi, 2009).

Financial literacy can increase financial knowledge and influence people’s financial decisions, choices, attitudes, and behavior (Bongomin et al., 2016; Campbell, 2006). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that financial literacy helps women entrepreneur in evaluating various financial products and services to maximize utility while avoiding investment fraud and other ineffective financial decisions. It is hoped that with good financial literacy, Women entrepreneur will be able to use various financial facilities according to their needs, rather than being tempted by inappropriate investment offers. This finding agrees with the financial literacy theory of financial inclusion of Ozili, (2020) which states that financial literacy will increase people’s willingness to join the formal financial sector. It argues that financial inclusion can be achieved through education that increases the financial literacy of citizens. When people become financially literate, they will seek formal financial services wherever they can find it.

Financial literacy has a positive significant effect on Social Capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Results from the analysis conducted indicate that hypotheses two (H2) is supported. This result proves that if someone has high financial literacy (knowledge and skills), they tend to have high social capital, such as being polite in their community (trust), also not reluctant to share information (collective action) and share ideas and thoughts or ability (bridging) in the community. This finding is consistent with previous research on the importance of financial literacy on social capital (Bongomin et al., 2016; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). According to Falk and Kilpatrick (2000), available social capital is found in the source of knowledge and the source of identity brought to society’s interaction, both individually and collectively. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that financial literacy will assist the community in creating more social capital. A well-educated community will exert influence in their surroundings, allowing them to assist their neighbors in achieving financial independence and avoiding investment fraud activities. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that financial literacy will assist the community in creating more social capital.

Social Capital has a positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Results from the analysis conducted indicate that hypotheses three (H3) is supported. This implies that social capital has a positive significant effect on financial inclusion among women entrepreneur in Manyu Division. It can be concluded that the higher a person’s social capital, the higher the level of financial inclusion. Social capital

is crucial in promoting resource sharing, which includes the neighborhood's expertise and abilities, which are the main drivers of financial literacy (Saputra & Dewi, 2017). Social capital through trust, bonding, bridging and collective action can increase the level of financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. Through the role of social capital, it can channel and create trust in the use of financial services and services, so that the level of financial inclusion can increase. This is in line with the results of research by Pulungan & Ndruru (2019), which proves that social capital has a positive and significant effect on financial inclusion because the better the level of trust in financial inclusion, the more development of financial inclusion will increase. This is also in line with the research (Safira & Dewi, 2019), which states that social capital has a significant effect on financial inclusion. But don't forget that this effect can also be positive in reverse, namely, the lower the level of social capital, the lower the financial inclusion that can be utilized.

Through social capital, women entrepreneur will always share information with other community members and want to provide valuable things in the community (collective action). This share information can increase the knowledge and skills of the women entrepreneur and their community in managing finances. It can provide convenience in quickly reaching financial products and services, such as obtaining investment products/services that suit their needs and are relatively safe to use (quality). From these results, it can be interpreted that the existing social capital in the community will encourage the growth of financial inclusion.

Social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division.

Results from the analysis conducted indicate that hypotheses four (H4) is supported. This implies that social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. Strong community cohesion will make women entrepreneurs learn from each other and influence each other, including family finance. The public will inform each other of various financial products that are accessible and follow the needs of their respective families. This finding is consistent with the findings of Pulungan & Ndruru (2019), who found that social capital plays an essential role in mediating and increasing various resources, including knowledge and skills acquired by the community as a result of financial literacy activities. This result further indicates that financial literacy influence on financial inclusion is reduced after the mediator social capital is controlled. This implies that social capital and financial literacy can gradually increase financial inclusion. This is if social capital as a dimension is built on values, culture, perceptions, institutions, and mechanisms in positive activities as a means of empowering people's views. So, it can be concluded that financial literacy and social capital influence financial inclusion.

Our study result states that the higher a person's financial literacy, the higher the person's social capital. Besides, the higher a person's financial literacy, the higher the financial inclusion. This finding that social capital has a partial mediation effect is similar to that of Goenadi et al. (2022), in their study title "the influence of financial literacy on financial inclusion: social capital as a mediating variable."

5.1 Conclusion

This study seeks to link financial literacy, social capital and financial inclusion by examining the mediating role of social capital in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu division, Cameroon.

The result shows that financial literacy is strongly corroborating with financial inclusion (38.28%) and social capital (22.31%). In the case of social capital, it was observed that it's more of Mamfe Central (11.25%), Upper Banyang (1.57%) and Akwaya (6.96%) phenomenon. Social capital is equally observed to be strongly correlated with financial inclusion (29.18%) and it's both secondary (28.4%) and higher education (44.57%) phenomenon. The mediation result shows that social capital is marginally mediating in the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion.

The findings suggest that the decision makers should create more awareness via financial technical workshop on the relevance of financial literacy on financial inclusion and social capital in Manyu division in particular and Cameroon in general. This is a wise step towards business performance and amelioration of economic well-being.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the research findings that the independent variable, financial literacy, has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable financial inclusion and the mediating variable social capital among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. Also, Social capital significantly mediates the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion among women entrepreneurs in Manyu Division. The recommendations are:

- 1) Collaboration between the government and financially literate people who have the skills required to ensure financial inclusion for individuals and every member of the country through wise financial decision-making. This recommendation is in line with collaborative intervention theory of financial inclusion which explains

that collaborative intervention from multiple stakeholders is necessary to provide formal financial services to the excluded population. The theory suggests that joint efforts from multiple stakeholders are needed to bring the excluded population into the formal financial sector.

- 2) Promoting education and enhancing financial literacy. Financial institutions can conduct education through similar small and medium-sized business groups periodically so that they understand various kinds of financial products and can invite other people to avoid illegal financial products. This is to achieve financial literacy which will go a long way to bring about financial inclusion among the women entrepreneurs.
- 3) Developing and implementing an effective financial inclusion strategy. Understanding the characteristics of a banking product, service, method of payment and all other financial affairs with all the advantages, disadvantages and convenience with all the risks is an important element for increasing financial literacy and inclusion.
- 4) Women entrepreneurs should build social capital through building trust, connection and relationship among the women. Women entrepreneurs in order to ensure financial inclusion must be actors, not just spectators. Social capital should be used by women entrepreneurs as a means to get access to finances.

5.3 Limitations and Areas for Future Studies

- i. This study considered data on women entrepreneur in Manyu Division. The findings from this study should not be directly applied to other groups. Thus, over generalization of the findings to women in order countries will require further investigation. Financial inclusion is an issue of concern to many African countries, and as a result, a cross-country investigation will be needed.
- ii. The study adopted a cross-sectional design. Future studies should take a longitudinal approach.
- iii. Another limitation of this study was the use of convenience sampling while administering the questionnaire. This might have caused inaccurate representation and researcher bias.
- iv. Also, since social capital was found to have a partial mediating effect on the relationship between financial literacy and financial inclusion, future studies can test its mediating effect on the same relationship aim and comparing and confirming results.
- v. Finally, the study adopted a quantitative approach during data collection and analysis. In future, an in-depth qualitative or mixed approach is needed to supplement and complement the quantitative results and to compare results.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

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