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# Negotiating access and belonging: Recounting the lived experiences and challenges of migrant women returnees in Nigeria

Samson Adewumi

## Abstract

The study explores the lived experiences of women migrant returnees in Nigeria. It aims to highlight the motivation and push factors for migration, understand the challenges and lived experiences of migrant women, and appraise their integration and sense of belonging. Through referrals and purposive sampling, a total of 20 migrant women were recruited and interviewed. The inclusion criteria include those who have lived and worked in the diaspora for a minimum of 5 years and 2 years as a returnee in Nigeria, respectively. The exclusion criteria involve women who migrated with families and those considered professionals. Themes were identified with the NVivo (v.12) qualitative software and the Content Qualitative Analytical tool employed to interpret these themes. The need for migration for many women includes access to improved economic life, infrastructure, and amenities, means of sustaining families in the home country, and improved social and political security. The lived experience of women migrants in the diaspora includes sexual harassment, rape, forced and inhumane labour practices, low wages, isolation and depression, and xenophobia. For many returnees, the challenge includes unemployment, integration, family support, inflation, and financial insolvency. The quest for integration and belonging is limited for many returnees. The paper argues for more robust migration policies and a well-established policy of integration for migrant returnees. The study recommends a more monitoring effort of the activities of the Nigerian border. This recommendation becomes crucial with the porous borders in Nigeria through which people, including women, migrate to other countries illegally and undocumented.

**Keywords:** *women, vulnerability, labour, migration, well-being*

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## About the author:

Researcher, Department of Sociology, University of Zululand, South Africa. Email: [adewumiS@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:adewumiS@unizulu.ac.za)

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## 1. Introduction

The idea of women migration had long remained unsearched with a large focus on men. The traditional idea of migration was largely conceived as a reserve for men (Nhengu, 2020), even with evidence of women being present and involved as dependent in the migration journey either as spouses, wives, or daughters (Oucho, 2011; Arora & Majumder, 2021). The continuous spread of civilization and global awareness has continued to increase women's autonomy and independence for migration, although major differences in migration challenges including discrimination, exploitation, abuse, and other health-associated risks exist between men and women, with women on the lowest end (Ola, 2023). The need to recognize the role of women in migration should not only dwell on characterizing data by sex but also lay a foundation for understanding the crucial role of gender relations at every phase of the migration cycle.

Migration research is often interrogated through the financial and economic benefits narration. However, analyzing women migration should consider other social interpretations including gender norms and culture. Migration can be empowering for women through employment and education opportunities (Lagakos, 2020). In contrast, women's migration studies show evidence of vulnerabilities rather than opportunities for many migrant women. Migration for many ignites vulnerabilities in terms of human trafficking, sexual abuse, unemployment, gender discrimination, and segregation (Oyebamiji, 2014; Paynter, 2024). Nigeria is no exception. For instance, the Nigeria has high drive of women migration as compared to the male counterpart. While this might be a wave of change globally, the Nigerian explanation calls for intervention. The National Bureau of Statistics in the last quarter of 2022 estimates that about 51.5 percent of women migrants left the country with a differential effect of 48.5 percent of males. Women migrate like any other migrants for economic prosperity, access to basic needs, and social and political stability. Recent trends in migration studies reveal that women migrate because of the decreasing cultural norm of dependence on the male gender, and more importantly, the autonomy and freedom enhanced by civilization. Thus, while it cannot be entirely neglected that many migrant women are making social and economic progress, there is still evidence of depression, psychological challenges, marital conflicts, and financial insolvency among many migrant women (Akanle, 2022). This forms part of the nub of this study.

Available studies on women's migration are lacking in context leaving out issues of integration, especially for migrant women returnees. For instance, available women migration studies with a Nigerian perspective include Oucho's (2012) analysis of migration decision-making of Kenyan and Nigerian women in London through cultural, family, and network interaction. Oyebamiji's (2014) thesis assessed life across borders of Nigerian women immigrants in Durban, South Africa, and experiences of migration and survival of Nigerian women (Akanle, 2022). Other studies include Worlu's (2011) immigrant Nigerian women's self-empowerment through consumption as cultural resistance; the leadership experience of immigrant Nigerian women in New York City (Muoka, 2016), and a more recent study on gendered asylum in the black Mediterranean: two Nigerian migrant experience of reception in Italy (Paynter, 2024). Other studies include rural-urban migration in developing countries (Selod & Shilpi, 2021) and COVID-19 and migration (Fielding & Ishikawa, 2021). Without a doubt that there are sparse studies on women migration, the bulk of available studies have been conducted outside the Nigeria setting, although with Nigeria's focus and lack the interrogation of the challenges and dynamics of integration for women migrant returnees. This research gap conveys the originality of this paper. In part, the objectives of the paper are to understand the push and motivational factors for women migration, the lived experiences and challenges, and the implication of integration, access, and belonging for women migrant returnees. This study intends to contribute to migration studies through the interrogation of integration, access, and a sense of belonging for many migrant women returnees in Nigeria.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Push factors for migration***

Recent changes in economic and social structure accept the interplay and gender involvement of both men and female in migration. Advances in women's participation in migration can be attributed to two main forces. The first phase explains the continuous deprivation and declining quality of life, with predominant effects on women at the rural level of society (Popoola et al., 2017). The second was the increasing spate of separation and divorce that seems to have eroded the trust many women have in the institution of marriage (Amare et al., 2021; Aghatise, 2004). Thus, these two antecedents were the major events that

characterized women's migration beginning in the 1970s in Africa (Rufai et al., 2019). In recent times, women migrants have now improved in terms of their social and financial standing with the ability to migrate from rural to urban areas. This development creates a new pathway and change in the social system and an alteration in communal worldviews concerning the responsibilities of women in societal development, with the understanding that these roles can be more effectively managed by searching for opportunities through migration (Bourne & Solomos, 2007; Fielding & Ishikawa, 2021).

Baudasse and Bazillier (2014) argue that gender inequality and labour market conditions represent the issues that motivate women's migration. To address this, it is important to promote gender equality and high-skilled women as a means of dissuading migration. In essence, women with high-skilled qualities are likely to migrate (Baudasse & Bazillier, 2014). In contrast, recent commentary suggests that low-skilled women form the bulk of migration in most African countries (Sözer, 2021). This reinforces the arguments about the high influx of women migrants with low skills through undocumented and illegal migration pathways (Sajuyigbe & Fadeyibi, 2017).

A critical reflection on migration data reveals an increasing trend of women migration compared to men in some parts of African countries (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Similar data also explains that women account for about half of the global migrant population (ILO, 2020). These explanations demonstrate and uphold some underlying drives spurring women's migration globally. Studies have also shown that women, often migrate to seek and improve their autonomy status, harness, and develop human capital prowess, and self-confidence, including the desire to create and establish some semblance of authority in the families as well as among friends and communities (Achenbach, 2018; Sözer, 2021; Amare et al., 2021). This self-worth tendency, according to Sithole and Dinbabo (2016), explains the psychological desire for migration, a more nuanced drive from the commonly known economic reasons. Migration can be used as leverage for women's employment and access to education and making independent decisions. However, this independence can further exacerbate the vulnerabilities of migrant women (Abizu, 2018; Arora & Majumder, 2021).

Women's preference of destination may also be impacted by inequitable social institutions that inhibit their economic, social, and political potential. Gender standards may

affect women's migration by defining their cultural expectations. Discriminatory social institutions in foundation countries may affect women's choice to migrate in different ways. Women's decision to migrate might be supported by a need to get free from gender-specific discriminatory practices. For instance, women may migrate from sexual molestation and abuse, and others from social stigma and the pressure of being separated or divorced as a woman (Achenbach, 2018; Amirapua et al., 2022). However, gender discrimination in social institutions may restrict the ability of women to migrate as well (Adepoju, 2006; Ajaero & Madu, 2014). For instance, a woman who depends solely on her spouse may find it extremely hard to plan migration.

### ***2.2. Women migration in perspective: issues and challenges***

The glass-ceiling effects manifested by cultural and social norms have continued to put women migrants at the underneath rung of the occupational pyramid (Amrita & Mishra, 2011; Berhanu & White, 2000). Studies show that a large constituent of undocumented migrant women are employed as housemaids and factory workers (Bongard & Nakajima, 2015; Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020). These women are exposed to sexual harassment, rape, defaults in payment, and other forms of physical abuse and assault (Lo lagoon, 2014; Bau et al., 2022). Women migration represents an element of gender discrimination. Women migrants encounter different challenges more often than men in the process of migration and integration (Masanja, 2010). For migrant women returnees who are empowered with new perspectives and realities, there is evidence of social challenges as a requirement for adjustment to the new realities of their origin (Luisa et al., 2014; Fielding & Ishikawa, 2021).

Migrant women suffer healthcare accessibility challenges and have limited opportunities to integrate socially and politically (Kan & Mukhopadhyay, 2022). There is evidence indicating that a substantial number of migrant women have skills and educational qualifications that are either not recognized or in tandem with the kind of job they do (Mberu, 2005). Women migrants tend to settle for jobs in the informal sector more than men that are largely unprotected from labour legislation (Baudasse & Bazillier, 2014; Jolof et al., 2022). Destinations of most migrant women treat them as workers with sparse understanding or no legal rights; a recipe that has increased the spate of abuse and other forms of molestation (Jensen, 2017). Migrant women face racism and discrimination. They are generally conceived by locals as intruders who have come to take their job opportunities.

While migrant women often take jobs neglected by the locals, they have been evidence of attacks and racism against migrant women (Kan & Mukhopadhyay, 2022; Lagakos, 2020).

Patriarchal dominations in most African societies where migrant women are domiciled generate some expected role behaviours from women such as perceiving and expecting women to be more private. These views of African women as traditional homemakers have been challenged by the feminist movement that assumes the role expectations of women are characterized by enslavement. The role expectations of women in the broad society are perceived as discriminatory with ensuing psychological challenges including mental distress for many migrant women (Derks, 2013; Mueller et al., 2023).

Women represent most migrants in the cohorts of persons with low educational and skills qualities, who migrate undocumented, compelled by economic demands and expectations. In effect, many of them end up with unsafe and indecent employment that is devoid of human safety and dignity (Mendola & Pera, 2021). Women migrants are more likely to be exposed to physical and verbal abuse, restrictive ties that constrain their potential to a particular employer, and conditions in movement, association, and remuneration that are unfair when compared with the work rendered (Sonalde & Banerji, 2008).

Migrating to a new clime for economic reasons no doubt depicts strain and vulnerabilities to migrants, irrespective of gender. However, the biological characteristics of women make them more vulnerable to sexual and gender-associated violence and assaults (Sharma, 2011). These abuses have a multi-layer impact on women's well-being including unplanned pregnancies, sexual infections, and other health-related problems (Pablo, 2010; Selod & Shilpi, 2021). Migrant women are at risk of different forms of stress and mental disorders compared to men (Omoyeni, 2013; Nzabamwita & Dinbabo, 2022). The fact that women fall in the greater part of the population who accept insecure and poorly remunerated work further exposes them to more exploitative conditions. Thus, it is safe to argue that migrant women are largely constrained and exploited in terms of the societal benchmark and how women are overly perceived by social, economic, and cultural interpretations.

### ***2.3 Vulnerability Theory: Theoretical Explanation***

The main assumption of the vulnerability thesis validates the position that people or individuals in a certain situational context can become weak and exposed to the vulnerability of risk and uncertainty (Mackenzie et al., 2014). The vulnerability analysis can be lengthened to explain the motivational factors for undocumented migration with the risk of exposure to



abuse, torture, and economic hardships (Mendola & Pera, 2021). Women migrants are often exposed and vulnerable to certain unhealthy situations including prostitution, and forced labour work lacking decency and dignity, which can be explained by situational factors such as poverty, socio-economic constraints, deprivation, and the challenge of social support (Gilodi et al., 2021). The notion behind the lack of opportunities, increased economic hardships, and the expectations of living a fulfilling economic life are all debates around the triggers for migration for many women (Mendola & Pera, 2021). It is safe to argue that women migrants can be considered vulnerable to migration challenges because of their socio-economic expectations and quest for an improved standard of living.

Mackenzie et al. (2014) propose different classifications of vulnerability. The idea of inherent vulnerability is conventionally classified as the intrinsic disposition of human conditions; that is, a type of vulnerability that is connected to human corporeality, dependency on others, and emotional and social nature on the one hand. On the other hand, the concept of situational vulnerability refers to the outward context and this may be affected by personal, social, political, and economic factors in which individuals live. The last phase of Mackenzie et al. (2014) classification demonstrates the inherent inequalities in social and economic status, dependency, and the push that could expose a person to being vulnerable to danger or exploitation in the context of migration.

The dialectic of inherent and situational vulnerability may be described as either dispositional or occurrent (Mackenzie et al, 2014). For example, being exploited in the real sense depends on a range of factors, including socio-economic conditions, location, and welfare, and the effect of these vulnerable factors may vary considering the causes of the vulnerability, the level of welfare provision in the country of destination among others (Nhengu, 2022). Unarguably, the socio-economic living circumstances can also impact the extent of vulnerability. Women migrants can be considered vulnerable on several layers of influence including the challenges of unemployment, the desire to create and change the social environment for the family, and the quest for improved security of lives, particularly for those migrating from conflict zones to a more secure environment.

As the global labour market continues to change with increasing labour demands across the globe, the surge in migration continues to be on the rise. Women are reportedly migrating in hordes and are often the drivers of migration in the case of family migration

(Brown, 2017). The argument perused in this paper, through the vulnerability discourse is to situate a narrative on the vulnerability of women in the context of migration and understand the myriads of factors influencing women's intention to migrate. The role of the vulnerability analysis cannot be overemphasized in the understanding of women's migration discourse. The theory is assessed in terms of its use in understanding the plight of migration, particularly among women migrants. However, the theory can be argued to have limited interpretation to the understanding of migration analysis, as not all persons, especially women become vulnerable to migration challenges.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

The study's philosophical assumptions support the interpretive research philosophy. This is considered important to produce a qualitative understanding and interpretation of the narrative of access and belonging, and the lived experiences of migrant women returnees (Saunders et al., 2009). The need to expand the discourse of migration studies from the prism of the interrogation of negotiating access and belonging by women supports the use of the exploratory research design. The study population comprised selected migrant women returnees who currently reside in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. A total of twenty (20) migrant women returnees were recruited. The inclusion criteria include those who have lived and worked in the diaspora for a minimum of 5 years and have lived not less than 2 years as returnees in Nigeria. The exclusion criteria, on the other hand, exclude migrant women who migrated with families and those considered professionals. This sample size appropriately justifies the tradition of qualitative study with emphasis on the use of a small sample size for deep uncovering of opinions, feelings, and expressions of research participants.

The recruitment procedures began with identifying six (6) women migrant returnees through a social welfare platform in Lagos State, Nigeria. Subsequent referrals were later made, and contacts were established with other women migrant returnee who also resides in Lagos State. After having explained the rationale of the study to all the identified migrants' women, it was discovered that only twenty (20) had the prerequisite to participate and provide in-depth insight into the research problem. The transcendental phenomenology sampling strategy was adopted. This is justified to make sense of the views and perspectives of the lived experiences of women migrant returnees. In other words, it seeks to create a

symbolic interaction of the migratory journey, lived experiences and challenges of migrant women returnees (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The migration narrations of women migrants are socially constructed and to generate appropriate meanings into these narrations, the phenomenology research design becomes justified to unearth deep qualitative meanings and insights through the semi-structured interviews approach.

The migrant women were identified from different strategic locations in Lagos State. Their characterization showed a mix of low- and middle-class Nigerians whose intention for traveling was to improve their economic conditions. Some of the low-income respondents went as far as obtaining loans to embark on the journey, while others had to save for several years in a bid to fulfill the dream of migration. African countries were the choice of migration for many migrants, except a few who migrated to other European and Middle East countries.

The study employed the semi-structured interview approach. This allows the unveiling of additional questions and ensures that clarity is given to all responses (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). An interview guide was also used to guide the flow and sequence of questions and responses (Saunders et al., 2009). The range of questions enquired probed into the motivating factors for migration; the lived experiences and the array of challenges for migrant women after returning to their home country. There are common challenges known with the interview method of data collection such as vagueness and non-clarity in responses, as well as the tendency of misunderstanding between the interviewer and respondents (Yin, 2016). These challenges were addressed in this study by ensuring that the questions were all designed in the English Language as understood by all respondents. Possible misconceptions between the respondents and interviewer were controlled by avoiding any leading and repetitive questions during the interview (Yin, 2016).

All the interviews were recorded, and additional notes were taken to further provide lucidity if ambiguity was observed. The interview commenced with a brief introduction of the aim of the study and voluntary participation was emphasized. Data quality was ensured through Trochim and Donnelly's (2007) four measures of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of data. The credibility of the qualitative data was ensured by reflecting all the opinions and views of the respondents in the analysis and results, while transferability supports the idea that the results become transferable to other contexts. The dependability was ensured by complying with all ethical

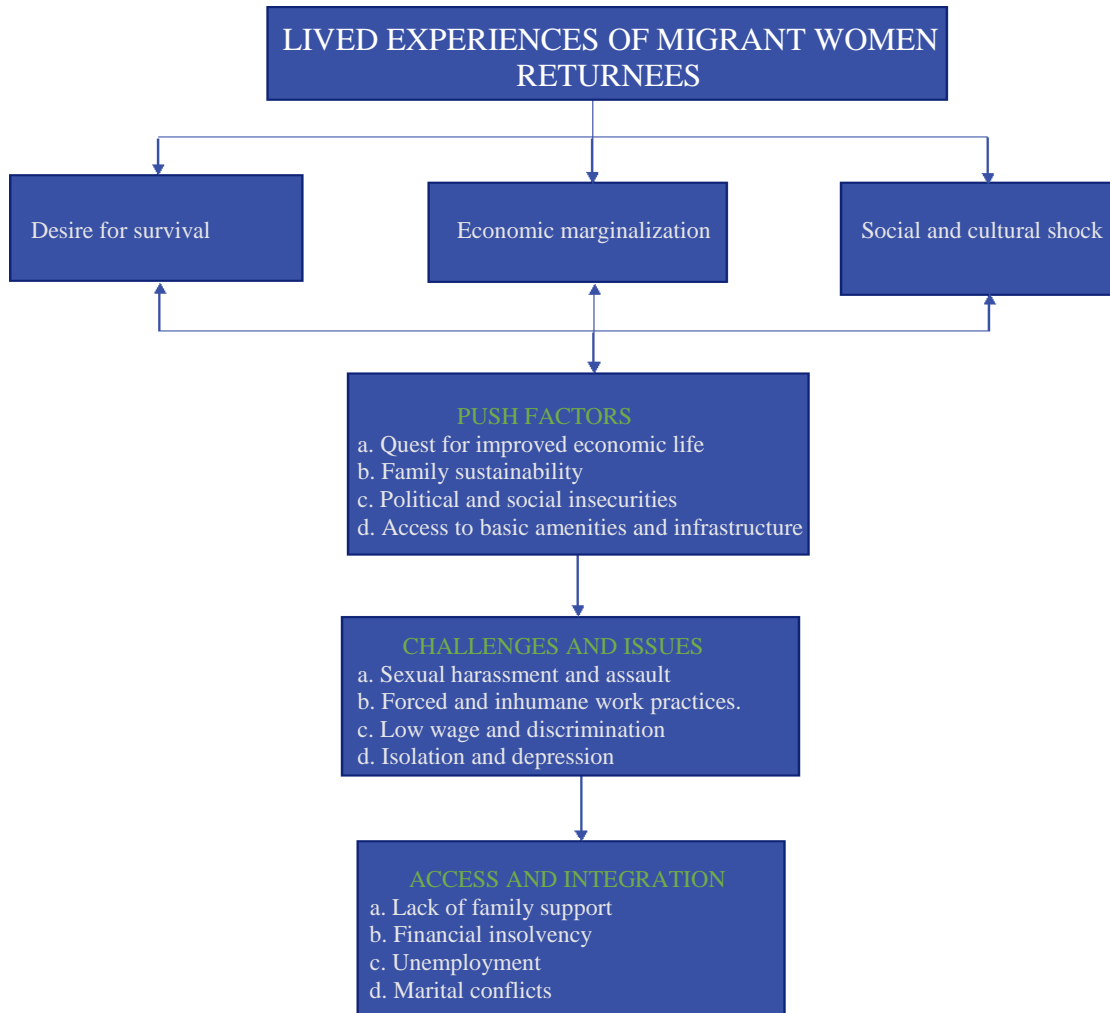
procedures. Lastly, it was ensured that there is a strong relationship between the data and results through confirmability. The NVivo (v.12) qualitative software was employed to make sense of the data by identifying relevant themes and sub-themes. The most frequently identified themes and sub-themes were further analyzed with the Content Qualitative Analytical tool. The Content Qualitative Analysis provides clear meanings and insights into the emerged themes and subthemes.

The study complied with appropriate ethical procedures in the recruitment of the respondents and conduct of the study. For instance, the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents were strictly protected, and a consent note was shared indicating willingness to participate in the study. The questions of safety and mental well-being of all respondents were given careful consideration in a manner that the environment where the study was conducted was of high standard devoid of any harassment. In addition, all questions that could trigger an emotional undertone were avoided. Before the commencement of the study, the consent and permission of all respondents were sought and granted by signing the consent forms. The question of the physical and emotional safety of respondents was also safeguarded and given clear priority. It was ensured that the study environment was safe and free from any physical harm. In addition, all respondents were protected from any emotional harm during and after the study.

#### **4. Results**

This section explains the drive and motivating factors that compelled women to migrate, the lived experiences while in the diaspora as migrants, and the challenges of access, integration, and sense of belonging for returnees. It was demonstrated through the analysis of the import of the Vulnerability Theory in the lived experiences of women migrants, and the quest to negotiate access and belonging.

Figure 1 explicates the synopsis of the findings, revealing the interaction among compelling drive and factors that sprout the intention to migrate, the ensuing consequences and challenges, and how these relate to the issues and assumptions raised in the Vulnerability Theory.

**Figure 1***Lived experiences and challenges of migrant women returnees*

Source: Author compilation, Adapted from Tade and Olaitan (2023).

#### ***4.1 Drive and motivation for migrating***

Participants were asked to narrate the reasons for migrating to understand the motives why people, especially women embark on migration. It was explained by most of the participants that one of the motivating factors for migrating is the quest to have access to an improved economic life considering the low performance of the Nigerian economy. While there have been different economic policies formulated in the interest of improving the lives of Nigerians, it was explained that much of the benefits are yet to be evidenced in many Nigerians, as the challenges of economic sustainability continue to be a far cry.

Most of the participants argued that even though they are not professionals who are skilled in any professional job, they believe that migrating to other climes will offer them

more improved economic life through engaging in menial jobs and other non-professional artisans' works. This perhaps, explains the increasing number of Nigerians, especially women who against all odds want to migrate, even with little or no skill. Similarly, while the reason for migrating by many might be genuine owing to the current economic woes of Nigeria, it is, however, important to highlight that migrating without possessing any professional skills often ends with disappointments.

Rather than not, the search for economic sustainability still supports the reasons for migration. This narrative was shared by one of the participants:

*I migrated for an improved economic life. I cannot afford to be quiet and stay while I cannot attend to my children's needs since I separated from their father. Their father is not financially responsible to them, and I thought since the Nigerian economy is not favourable to many of us, I thought it would be wise to migrate to work. I mean any work a woman can do since I am not skilled in any professional job. You might be wondering and surprised, but the truth for me is that I left this country because I believe nothing can make sense here again and I think most women who migrated share these ideas too.*

The implication of this analysis can be drawn from the worsening situation of many migrant women who migrated illegally without adequate planning for survival. There is evidence indicating that migrant women are more susceptible to economic and psychological hardships because of poor migration planning (Arora & Majumder, 2021). The insinuation would be for migrant women to be developed in terms of skill acquisition before embarking on migration. This is important as it will aid in quick transition and integration into the labour market of destinations and tends to relieve any envisaged economic challenges.

Another participant, a single woman who used to work as a hairstylist in the Lagos metropolis shared similar sentiments as follows:

*I was a hairstylist before I migrated to Libya 7 years ago. The idea was sold to me by one of my cousins that it is far better economically in Libya than in Nigeria, and you know as at then, the Nigerian economy was not at its peak again such that patronage became exceedingly low and it somehow difficult for me to feed and take care of myself. I had to sell all my equipment in a bid to raise funds for my travels. Do not forget, I was promised all manners of jobs*

*there and how swiftly I will recover financially. So, for me, I will say I migrated in the quest to improve my economic life.*

The quest to maintain family sustainability, especially for those with aged parents was also justified by several participants. Some of them argued that they are the breadwinners of their families, and it is unlikely for them to continue with this responsibility in Nigeria. Thus, pursuing financial prosperity overseas through migration was considered the appropriate thing. Many of the respondents further contended that as the economic and social conditions of Nigeria continue to deteriorate, they must search for a green pasture. While these contentions are not far-fetched, this paper argues that the route and means of migrating seem to defile this objective, as many migrated through unsafe and undocumented pathways contrary to established international laws on migration.

Aside from the desire to provide for the elderly and parents, many migrant women highlight the need to provide for their immediate families at home, including the sustenance of their children. This narrative supports cases where the spouses are out of jobs, thus failing in their financial responsibilities to sustain the home. These testimonials reveal some sort of cultural shifts in Nigeria, where women are often not expected to take the financial responsibilities of the home, but rather provide care, nurture the family, and the development of the children. One of the participants submitted as follows:

*I migrated mainly because I was tired of the promises of the Nigerian government. I cannot afford to see my elderly parents die poor like that. I migrate firstly in their interest, so I can be able to give them a good life at least before they get very old and die. I cannot withstand the fact that with all their investment in me and my siblings, I would not be able to do anything substantial for them before they die. I found that not pleasing and I felt one of the fastest ways to make it financially was to migrate as I was not finding my path here in Nigeria.*

Another participant reiterated the following on the push factor of family sustenance in the home country.

*My husband had been left without a job for the past 6 years and every attempt to try and get a new job has not been yielding fruit, so I had to be the one to try this time around. I tried back in Nigeria, but nothing was forthcoming. Do not forget I am not a professional and have never worked before. But with the situation of my husband, I had to embrace the opportunity to leave Nigeria to*

*work in another African country so that I could sustain my children and support my husband for the time being.*

The responsibilities of government across the globe include the protection of lives and property and by extension the assurances of political and social security. These responsibilities are constitutionally provided by political leaders who are elected to various political offices. The consistent political and social conflicts rampaging the affairs of the country have continued to threaten the peace and stability of the country on many grounds. The sentiments shared that support their migration intentions are in tandem with the current insecurity that has held Nigeria bound in recent times. One of the dilemmas is the recent trend of kidnapping across the country. Respondents report fear of being kidnapped and paying a ransom before being released or being killed, and in most cases, ransom is being collected and victims still end up being killed. This position stems from a global concern for migration as countries with consistent insecurities also have evidence of people migrating from the insecurity zone to a safer country.

*I have had many near-death experiences here in Nigeria and this was the primary reason why I migrated. You can see that the country has been overridden by attacks by Boko-haram sects and others who now kidnap as a profession. I had been a victim of kidnapping before, and I knew what I went through before my release after my family and friends rallied around to set me free with ransom. After this ugly, a friend introduced an opportunity to migrate to me and I accepted. Although the experience was largely bitter as a woman, I did that because of the uncertainties about the security of life in Nigeria.*

For others, the need to have access to basic amenities and infrastructure for improved and general well-being sprouted their motive to migrate.

*Everybody has their reasons for migrating. I had my business here before, so I was not doing badly. But it got to a point where my business was greatly affected by a lack of basic amenities like electricity and good roads. So, I decided to migrate to a country like the United Arab Emirates that has great basic amenities, at least to see how I can integrate and continue my business there. As you know, the experience has not been that rosy, and this is part of the reason I had to return.*



#### *4.2 Challenges and lived experiences*

Many of the challenges explained by most of the participants include sexual harassment and assaults, forced and inhumane labour practices, low wages, isolation and depression, and xenophobia. Migrant women have been reported to be victims of sexual harassment and assault as migrants across the globe. Of interest lately, is the surge of sexual harassment against migrant women domiciled in some of the Northern African countries, including Libya. Migrant women have remained a subject of ridicule and are being subjected to different forms of unhealthy treatment. The Nigerian government is no doubt lacking the willpower to take decisive action as this practice continues unabated. There have been an increase in reported cases of migrant women, particularly from Nigeria who have been victims and continue to receive a dose of sexual molestation and harassment from their employers.

The analysis is supported by the continued economic woes of Nigeria and how this has continued to promote the influx of women migration. While this is evident, the trends of sexual harassment and assault against women will continue as migrant women are perceived as desperate for continued exploitation by their employers (Bau et al., 2022). Unless the Nigerian government addresses the escalating economic hardship and border control measures, women migrants will continue to migrate for survival and be exposed to several gender-based issues in their destinations.

There are many instances where migrant women who refuse to be sexually assaulted or abused are being injured and, in some cases, resulting in death. Often than not, the perpetrators are left untainted while others continue the heinous act sighting the desperation of migrant women and the economic woes in their various countries, including Nigeria. One of the participants explained her experience as follows:

*When I first got to Libya, I found out that it is very common to hear how women are being sexually abused. This act is common among women who are employed as housemaids. I had a similar experience when I could not get any other job aside from being a housemaid and domestic helper. My case is not different from others. I was often sexually abused by the man who employed me and sometimes his brothers whenever the wife and others were not home. I have been injured before while I was trying to avoid his sexual advances.*

Another strategy often employed to perpetuate sexual molestation and harassment against migrant women is the promise to offer unemployed migrant women jobs. Upon acceptance and understanding of the urgent need of these women, the perpetrators then begin to strike with their sexual abuse. One of the returnees from Turkey had the following testimonies to share.

*My case was a bit different from other cases of sexual molestation and abuse against migrant women. When I got to Turkey, I was introduced to an agent who promised to get me a job so I could settle in as soon as possible. After meeting him, I noticed his advances toward me on the phone and how he tried to touch my body on one of the occasions I went there. He tried to force himself and have his way with me. He told me that failure to cooperate with him meant he would not be able to get me a job, and even if I went to report him, the authorities would do nothing about it because I am a foreigner.*

Women migrants, and migrants in general, are often subjected to different inhumane labour practices considered not appropriate for the locals. There have been many reported cases of inhumane labour practices that migrants are being subjected to. Another perspective to understand the trend of inhumane labour practices against women migrants is the conditions and pathway of migration. For instance, many women migrate inappropriately and against globally accepted standards. In other cases, they migrate through the sea and others had to spend months through the desert before arriving at their destination. These movements are all against conventional migration policy. In essence, it is expected that migrant women survive through involvement in heinous strands of jobs, particularly because of the lack of appropriate documentation.

*Yes, it was a huge risk, but I had to embark on it for survival. Upon arrival, the story was different from what we were told in Nigeria before we got there. The promise was that some jobs would be waiting for us that we would have to choose from these available jobs. It was when I got there that I knew it was all a lie and that without appropriate documentation, I could not do anything near a decent job. I ended up with some jobs that lacked any form of decency just to survive.*

Many married women migrate without family and end up being alone for a long period without family bonding. For others who are yet to start a family, migrating comes with a lot of negatives including having to be alone, especially in a new climate. This

development has resulted in several depressed persons among many migrant women. Aside from the concern of depression, isolation, and leaving alone as migrants have continued to expose many women to untold hardship and abuse. The general perception that women, especially those with family must not be too separated from their family in a typical African cultural set-up has been relegated as many women continued to migrate neglecting the importance of family ties and bonding.

*I left my family back home and migrated to South Africa. I must be sincere to you sometimes I often ask myself if I made the right choice or not as I continue to miss my family a lot. There are times I will be at work and all that is passing through my mind is my family. I used to miss the family ties and bonds we shared. I used to miss my two children especially. I also miss my husband as I must keep myself for him and it has not been easy. I felt I had been isolated, and I noticed depression was taking a whole on me then.*

Another participant recounts through her personal experience as follows:

*I fell into depression when I was in Libya. This was consistent and happened several times. I often missed my family a lot and I felt lonely and isolated. When the pressure became too much, I had to confide in a friend who suggested I visit the hospital. Upon my visit to the hospital, I was diagnosed with depression. This continues for a long time, and I begin to lose concentration on all the things I do even work. In other not to destroy my mental health, I had to come back to Nigeria.*

Many migrant women are discriminated against in terms of access to health facilities and in competing for job opportunities among others. This argument shows a great deal of concern in terms of the inhumane and unjust treatment of migrants, especially women. For instance, there are shreds of evidence that migrants are competing with locals with available scarce jobs and exerting pressure on the health care system. The analysis explains the situation in many African countries. The South African case is a good example where politicians have continued to politicize the question of accountability and service delivery with frequent calls on the infringement of migrants. This situation explains the unwillingness of politicians to address issue-based discussion but rather puts migrants at the endpoint of hostility, xenophobia attacks, and discrimination.

*Before I left for South Africa then, I was pregnant, and I did not know this until I got to South Africa. I commenced maternity immediately to avoid complications. At the hospital there in South Africa, I saw firsthand discrimination. I will be in the waiting room for several hours and nobody will be willing to attend to me because I am a migrant, while the locals are expressly being attended to. I could not afford to register at the private hospital because of the huge expenses, so I opted for free medical health care with the public hospital instead.*

Discrimination in access to employment and unhealthy competition against migrant women has remained a serious strain for many migrant women. This position was contended with evidence of the frequency of employment discrimination against migrant women across all sectors of the economy. One of the respondents explains how she has been intentionally discriminated against for jobs she merited.

*You can imagine all I went through because I was a migrant woman. I had thought that all would go well upon my arrival, and I would quickly settle in with a job. Unfortunately, the case was not as I thought. I faced a lot of discrimination and stereotypes during my job-hunting days. All of these were because I am a migrant woman. I had been told severally that I had come to compete and take their jobs and that I must go back to my country. The challenge was not an easy experience.*

#### ***4.3 Integration and sense of belonging***

Many migrant women returnees experience a lack of family support, financial insolvency, and unemployment. Respondents explained the challenge of family neglect and support, and how this has made life more difficult for them since their return. The lack of family support and negligence reinforces the inability of migrants to meet the expectations of their family and relatives while overseas. In a typical African setting such as Nigeria, there are a lot of expectations from people living overseas. Many family members have become contemptuous of anyone who lives overseas and could not meet up with this expectation. The fact, however, remains that many migrants, including women, go through a lot for survival while overseas and often fall short of these expectations. These expectations are culturally laced, and many migrant returnees are culturally bound to fulfill them for ease of integration and a sense of belonging (Nhengu, 2022). The implication of this analysis is the likely occurrence of segregation and alienation between members of the same family. The struggle for integration and a sense of belonging in this

sense reflects some of the challenges migrant returnees had to contend with after a bad migration experience in their various destinations. For many of the returnees, the psychological traumas from deportation culminate into another phase of integration and sense of belonging challenges in Nigeria.

*I have not been receiving the adequate family support I desired for a proper integration since my return to Nigeria. I believe I did my best in terms of assisting people the little way I could while I was overseas. Remember I did travel as an undocumented migrant woman, and you know what this means in terms of securing a good job to make good income. So that affected the extent of what I could make and assisted family members and relatives with. But I did my best. You know that people are not always satisfied. So, in their mind, I think they are paying me back for the lack of support I have been receiving from them.*

The perception that men are saddled with the financial responsibilities of the home is gradually fading as the Nigerian economy bit harder. The present economic challenges require financial support and cooperation from both the husband and wife for a healthy home. The general opinion shared by most of the respondents explains a situation where they have been unable to continue supporting the family financially since their return. This scenario explains the impact of the rising inflation that has culminated in the liquidity of many small businesses and the escalating rate of unemployment.

*I have been financially insolvent, and this is affecting my family. I have not been able to receive the support I need to revive my financial position, even if it means starting a small business. I have not been able to receive any help in this regard despite doing my very best. I understand this is taking a serious toll on my husband as I have not been able to support him since my return. The rising cost of things and unemployment is not helping matters. I am hoping I get the needed support for a holistic integration as soon as possible.*

For many single migrant returnees, the challenge is related to marital conflicts as many of them have been faced with the cultural pressure of having a family. This explains the cultural and social crisis that comes with migration as many single returnee women are often perceived as arrogant and non-submissive. This perception was narrated by one of the migrant returnee women who shared her ordeal in the quest for integration and creating a family of her own.

*I have been traumatized since I came back from Oman. I have not been able to get a suitor who is serious about marriage, and I am no longer growing younger. I understand that a lot of men here in Nigeria often think that when a single woman travels overseas, she has gone for prostitution and cannot be submissive to them according to cultural and social expectations. I am a victim of these expectations as most men are scared that I will not be submissive after marriage. This has caused me a lot in terms of my ability to integrate back into the system.*

## **5. Discussion**

This study accounted the lived experiences of migrant women returnees in Nigeria. The Nigerian model offers rich research debates in the context of the influx of human migration. Empirical evidence from migration studies has been used to understand the diverse range of economic and social challenges of countries, whose citizens migrate in droves. Its importance has continued to offer strategic policies for the understanding of human trafficking and other migration offensive practices, especially among children and women.

The paper demonstrates the reasons and motivations for women migration. These include access to improved economic life, and access to basic amenities and infrastructure. This analogy can be explained by the absence of basic amenities including electricity, and access to good and healthy waters, good roads, and health care provisions in Nigeria. Family sustainability was also rated as a motivation for migration. This argument supports the intention to build a formidable family through consistent financial support from migrants to their loved ones back home. The fallout from this intention is the avoidance of poverty by families of migrants in Nigeria. Political and social insecurities have also forced many migrant women to migrate in avoidance of the frequent ethnic and religious conflicts, with the recent being kidnapping. Similar studies have been reported in migration literature (Paynter, 2024; Oucho, 2011; Odimegwu & Adewoyin, 2020).

The paper also explains the challenges and lived experiences of migrant women. Many migrant women reported sexual harassment and assault, forced and inhumane labour practices, and low wages. There has been evidence of denials in accessing medical facilities, and equal access to compete for employment opportunities (Omoyeni, 2013; Mendola & Pera, 2021). Findings also reveal the incessant cases of depression among

migrant women due to long absence from family and relatives (Ola, 2023; Amirapua et al., 2022). This explains one of the conundrums of migration for people who migrate without family, especially women. The dimension of sexual assault and molestation takes the forms of physical assault and forceful raped in some instances. A number of these inhumane treatments have been reported to authorities without any hope for justice (Mackenzie et al., 2014; Jensen, 2017). These challenges support a call for the rejigging and monitoring of Nigerian migration policies to protect the interests of migrants. Several studies have reported the challenges and experiences of migrant women (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020), with few on migrant women (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2022; Fielding & Ishikawa, 2021). Redirecting focus on employment creation and enabling a working environment where women can compete are issues that can be deployed to address the continuous spate of migration in Nigeria.

The question of integration and building a sense of belonging for migrant women returnees comes with some reactions including the challenge of lack of family support and financial insolvency. Many migrant women desire that they receive the needed moral and family support possible so they can commence their integration process earnestly. Similar studies have shown the challenges of lack of family support for the integration of many migrant women returnees (Odimegwu & Adewoyin, 2020; Jolof et al., 2022). A shift in the financial standing of many migrant women returnees also depicts one of the integration challenges they have had to deal with. Many migrant women returnees are constrained by the challenge of commencing a family of their own due to the stereotypes attached to women migrants in this part of the world. These stereotypical behaviours are no doubt laced with cultural and social norms that perceive women migrants as difficult and non-submissive. Studies have reported similar integration challenges for migrant women (Odimegwu. & Adewoyin, 2020; Akanle, 2022).

The findings support the assumption of the vulnerability thesis. Vulnerability analysis argues that people in certain situations can become weak, helpless, and vulnerable to risk. Placing this supposition within the narratives of the challenges and lived experience of migrant women, migrant women can become vulnerable to unhealthy and life-threatening situations like sexual harassment, and most times death that can be possibly explained by situational circumstances, including the desire for improvement of

economic life, security and the protection of lives and property. In other words, migrant women can become vulnerable considering their economic and social status desires.

## **6. Conclusion**

The discourse of migration has long remained a debate among African countries, including Nigeria. Unarguably, there has not been any serious attempt to reduce the ascending rate of undocumented migration, especially by women on the part of the Nigerian government. It is important to argue that any serious attempt to address the surge of unlawful migration from Nigeria must be thoroughly accessed and implemented. This is important as the drivers and challenges of women migration are unconnected from the poor implementation of appropriate policy and monitoring frameworks. In the case of Nigeria, an all-inconclusive policy, implementation, monitoring, and women empowerment are critical to addressing the upsurge of women migration. The study also argues for a framework that supports an appropriate reintegration of migrants' women returnees for a positive contribution to the social, political, and economic landscape of the country.

The study canvasses for a more strategic policy evaluation as the most potent pathway to addressing migration challenges. This suggestion connotes that migration policy and action plan must be strongly adhered to and employed as a standard for reshaping the Nigerian image. The Nigerian government must strategically align these measures with national imperatives for positive results. The study recommends more monitoring effort of the activities of the Nigerian border. This recommendation becomes crucial with the porous borders in Nigeria through which people, including women, migrate to other countries illegally and undocumented. This effort must follow with appropriate legislative sanctions on adherent Nigerians. Future studies can interrogate the sociological implications of migrant women returnees.



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# Itsbat Nikah: Legalizing marriage outside the record in Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>Rifqi Kurnia Wazzan, <sup>2</sup>Thohir Luth, <sup>2</sup>Hanif Nur Widhiyanti & <sup>2</sup>Rachmi Sulistyarini

## Abstract

This study focuses on the legal impact of marriage registration in the context of itsbat marriages in religious courts, particularly for marriages that occurred after 1974 without an official certificate and were not registered in the compilation of Islamic law (KHI). It aims to evaluate the itsbat marriage as a legal mechanism for recognizing marriages that are not officially registered. Normative analysis, a philosophical and analytical approach, serves as the research method, reviewing the relevant legal framework and court practice in handling divorce cases. The results showed that unregistered marriages after 1974 can be legally recognised through the itsbat nikah procedure. The Article 7, Paragraph 3, letter KHI, outlines the necessary conditions. With this procedure, spouses can receive written evidence of their marriage's legality in the form of a marriage certificate, which is then registered by the official Religious Affairs office. This study emphasizes the importance of marriage registration for legal certainty and protection of individual rights, and highlights how itsbat nikah plays a critical role in addressing the problem of marriage without official registration.

**Keywords:** *marriage, marriage registration, marriage certificate, itsbat marriage*

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## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. Faculty of Law, Brawijaya University, Indonesia. Email: [Malangrifqi00@gmail.com](mailto:Malangrifqi00@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Law, Brawijaya University, Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

Before Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage was passed, marriages performed by Muslims who met the aforementioned criteria were legally recognized and recognized by the Indonesian government. However, since the passage of the law, in order for a marriage to be recognized by the state, it must be registered with the Office of Religious Affairs for Muslims and with Civil Registration for non-Muslims (Bakung et al., 2023). Registering a marriage provides administrative order, legal clarity, and protection for the couple's marriage.

According to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, there are several benefits to marriage when practiced properly (Azizah, 2014):

ذَا نَ كَا مَنْ وَ الْأَمَمَ مُكَاتِرٌ بِكُمْ جُوفَائِي وَ تَزَّ وَ مَيِّ فَلَيْسَ بِسُنَّتِي يَعْمَلُ لَمْ فَمَنْ سُنَّتِي مِنَ النِّكَاحِ  
وَجَاءَ لَهُ الصَّوْمَ فَإِنَّ بِالصِّيَامِ فَعَلَيْهِ يَجِدُ لَمْ وَمَنْ فَلْيَنْكِحْ طَوَّلَ

*"Anyone who does not follow my Sunnah, which includes the institution of marriage, is not welcome in my community. Also, tie the knot; I'm pleased of how many of you there are compared to other peoples. Anyone who is capable, let them tie the knot. Someone who is unable to locate it is obligated to fast. For Farji, fasting actually reduces desire."*

Marriage, according to the preamble of Article 1 of Law number 1 of 1974, is "a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife," with the goal of fostering the integrity of faith within a family unit and, ultimately, eternal happiness based on the Almighty Godhead. According to the law, a marriage is a legally binding partnership between a man and a woman, with all the rights and responsibilities of a contracting party (MK, 2010).

Legislation in Indonesia that incorporates both positive and religious regulations has laid forth the requirements for marriage. A marriage is deemed legal in Islamic law if it satisfies the criteria and pillars of marriage. In positive law, a marriage is lawful if it is registered with the state administration and satisfies the pillars and conditions of marriage. Those who choose not to record their marriage might nevertheless take use of the legal avenues available to them. Although it may not be well known, many weddings continue to take place without proper documentation, putting vulnerable women and children at risk.



The Religious Courts and Mahkamah Syar'iyah have jurisdiction over matters related to the legalization of marriage, which is generally known as *Itsbat* Nikah (Suryani et al., 2023), *nikah* refers to marriage. The resolution of marriage *itsbat* instances requires registration in line with several strictly controlled rules and regulations. The Guidebook for the Implementation of Duties and Administration of Religious Courts (also called Book II) spells out the steps to take when a marital dispute arises. It is a guide and a reference for all Religious Court officials, especially Judges, Registrars/Substitute Registrars and Bailiffs in carrying out their duties in the field of judicial administration and judicial technicalities. *Itsbat* situations involving marriage may be either consensual or contested. Whoever handles the matter decides whether registration is optional or compulsory. Because the case is in the form of a request, there is no resistance in a volunteer case. A contentious litigation, on the other hand, involves a disagreement between the parties involved (Mujahideen, 2012).

The Directorate General of Religious Courts presented its annual report on January 29, 2021. In addition to the number of cases still outstanding for 2019, this year-end report also includes the total number of cases registered with all levels of Indonesia's Religious Courts (Shar'iyah) in 2020, from the First Level to the Appellate Level. The Nikah *Itsbat* cases-specific Annual Report shows that 49,763 cases have been reported, 47,362 have been decided, and 2,656 have been determined due to revocation (Directorate General of Badilag MA RI, 2019). These data suggest that, for some segments of Indonesian society, *Sirri* marriage remains an ingrained cultural norm, with the exception of *itsbat* marriage, which has long been seen as a viable alternative. There are still issues with *sirri* weddings, even though *itsbat* marriage provides an option for coping with them (Harahap, 2017).

According to Article 2 paragraph 2 of Law Number 1 of 1974 pertaining to marriage, "every marriage is recorded according to applicable laws and regulations" and in accordance with Article 5 paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 of the Compilation of Islamic Law/Instructions of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, it is non-negotiable to register a marriage because this is related to the validity or invalidity of the marriage according to state administrative law. In addition, Paragraph 1 of Number 1 of 1991 states that "*marriage registrar employees carry out the registration of marriages as stated in paragraph 1 in order to ensure orderliness for Islamic communities.*" However, Paragraph 2 states that this recording is necessary but not mandated. This study argues that the line "must be noted" in

paragraph 1 of Article 5 of the Compilation of Islamic Law, arguing that the word "must" is imperative or harmonic. The goal is to attain legal certainty, which is known as *Het Rechtszekerheidsbeginsel*.

In order to attain legal certainty, the Compilation of Islamic Law allows couples whose marital status is not recorded to have the option to legitimize their marriage via the Religious Courts, as mentioned in Article 7 paragraph 2. Nevertheless, the Compilation of Islamic Law places restrictions on the validity of marriages with respect to certain issues, as stated in paragraph 3 of Article 7 (Muhtar & Kasim, 2023): (1) a marriage that took place before the passage of Law number 1 of 1974; (2) a marriage certificate that has been lost or destroyed; (3) questions regarding the validity of one of the marriage's conditions; (4) a marriage that took place in the context of a divorce settlement; and (5) marriages performed by individuals who do not face any marriage-related obstacles as outlined in Law number 1 of 1974. According to the rules, the grounds for submitting a marriage *Itsbat* application are indicated by letters (a) through (d), whereas letter (e) is a must in order for the request to be approved. Every married couple is required by law to get their marriage registered. Failing to do so has legal ramifications for both the married couple and their offspring, including: (1) the marriage is declared invalid by the state due to the non-fulfillment of the essential marital requirements; (2) a husband may divorce his wife at any moment without a trial; (3) the legal status of children born into a marriage is murky; and (4) the right to support or inheritance does not extend to spouses or children by the state (Ma'sum, 2013).

Before Law No. 1 of 1974 was put into effect, marriage contracts that meet all the requirements of a marriage between a couple can be legally recognized. Marriages that took place after the law was passed can still be justified, but only if all the requirements of the marriage are met and the judge gives special consideration to them. There is a clear legal framework surrounding marriage registration in Indonesia, but the marriage *itsbat* phenomenon shows how complicated and pervasive unregistered weddings are in Indonesian culture. This is highlighted in the yearly report of the Directorate General of Religious Courts.

The fact that *itsbat* marriage exists as a means of legitimizing unregistered weddings demonstrates that this issue is being addressed. However, it also highlights that there are still significant obstacles and problems with its execution. Persistence of this practice is caused by an interplay of legal, social, and cultural factors; this, in turn, has far-reaching consequences

for people and society, particularly as it relates to the legitimacy of marriage, the protection of wives and children under the law, and the certainty of the law. Consequently, a multi-pronged strategy emphasizing public education on the significance of marriage registration in addition to social and legal considerations is necessary to overcome this difficulty.

Unregistered marriages often result in a variety of legal and social problems. Legal uncertainty and vulnerability for spouses and their children result from the high number of officially registered marriages in Indonesia. This includes difficulties obtaining inheritance rights, child custody, and legal protection in divorce cases. Furthermore, children born into unregistered marriages face barriers to social and legal status recognition, which can affect their access to education and health services. The *itsbat nikah* procedure, which allows the official recognition of previously unregistered marriages, is a response to this problem. *Itsbat Nikah* not only strengthens legal certainty, but also helps to ensure social and legal protection for spouses and their children. The inclusion of *itsbat nikah* in this study emphasizes the importance of understanding and implementing this process to address gaps in marriage registration. Hence, this study aims to assess the issue by addressing the following research questions:

1. How the Compilation of Islamic Law relates to the implementation of *itsbat* marriage in religious courts to marriages that were not registered after 1974?
2. What were the options for couples previously married in a *Siri* marriage once the marriage legislation is decided?

## 2. Literature Review

Both the positive legal provisions of Law No. 1 of 1974 on marriage and elements of Islamic law as found in the compilation of Islamic law have a significant impact on marriage regulation in Indonesia (Owoyemi, 2019). They drafted an all-encompassing code of laws that governs marriage in every detail, including the requirements for a marriage to be legally recognised and the pillars upon which it must be based. In Islam, marriage is more than simply a social tie; it is a holy covenant with significant personal and societal consequences. Thus, in order to ensure the seriousness and legitimacy of a marriage, Islam lays forth the requirements and pillars that must be fulfilled. These include the presence of witnesses, a dowry, consent, the guardians of the marriage, and the prospective spouses. To be valid under Indonesian positive law, a marriage must adhere to *Syar'i* and be registered with the

appropriate authority, which in this case is the Office of Religious Affairs for Muslims. This will safeguard the interests of the spouses, establish their rights and responsibilities, and legitimise any children born into the union (Dean, 2024). On the other hand, sirri marriages—married off outside of the formal registry—do happen on occasion in the field. The state-sanctioned rights, including maintenance, inheritance, and legal protection in the case of a divorce or other marital conflict, are particularly at risk in this kind of marriage. One legitimate way to get beyond these issues is via marriage (Mahendra & Maisuri, 2022). An unrecorded marriage may be recognised legally by the formation of *itsbat nikah* by the Religious Court, subject to specific circumstances being satisfied.

Unregistered weddings have a disproportionately negative effect on women and children, making the *itsbat nikah* procedure all the more crucial for their protection (Helandri, 2023). As part of the *itsbat nikah* procedure, the Religious Court determines if a marriage satisfies the requirements of Islamic law and positive law, and whether there are any *Syar'i* hurdles or rules that prohibit the marriage from being recognised. Additionally, religious courts make sure that the *itsbat nikah* doesn't legitimise anything that goes against religious and legal principles, such marriage without consent, child marriage, or polygamy without permission.

Both the importance of the legislation and the difficulties in applying it are brought to light by a legal examination of the *itsbat nikah* decision. For instance, with regards to the ease of access to the court for those seeking to register for a marriage, the lucidity of the processes and prerequisites, and the general understanding of the significance of marriage registration. In addition, this approach raises questions about how a pluralistic society like Indonesia's may strike a balance between religious standards and the need of positive legislation.

### **3. Methodology**

The problem or idea that inspired this investigation qualifies it as normative legal research. The methodology is philosophical and analytical in nature, with an emphasis on logical viewpoints and critical and philosophical analysis leading up to conclusions that seek to generate new discoveries in order to address the primary issue (Ishaq, 2017). In addition, descriptive analytical tools were used to examine the matter at hand, specifically outlining

the relevant laws as they pertain to legal theory and constructive police strategies (Mahmud Marzuki, 2011).

As part of its investigation, this study looks at how the religious courts dealt with *itsbat* marriage cases, specifically at how they evaluated the evidence. The effects of the *Itsbat Nikah* ruling on married couples, including questions of marital legitimacy, spouse rights and responsibilities, and the legal standing of any children born of the union, were also discussed, along with the ways in which Islamic law and marriage regulations have been codified to influence this procedure. Therefore, this research not only provides a thorough account of the regulation and application of *Itsbat Nikah* under Indonesian law, but it also highlights important problems and suggest solutions to enhance future legal practice and policy concerning *Itsbat Nikah*.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### ***4.1. Application of Itsbat Marriage in Religious Courts***

When beginning a family, the marriage contract is crucial. A contract could be in good standing, or it might be invalid due to harm. In order for a marriage contract to be fully valid, all of its terms and conditions must be satisfied. It goes without saying that Sharia law mandates the fulfillment of a number of marital obligations and pillars. The number of pillars of marriage is a matter of debate among scholars. Certain hold that marriage requires all of the characteristics listed in the pillars, while others hold that certain aspects might be considered pillars in and of themselves.

As an integral part of every activity that is carried out, a pillar is the most important element that cannot be disregarded. Conditions, on the other hand, are items that aren't directly connected to an action sequence but which are necessary for the execution of that sequence. According to Imam Syafi'i, there are five essential components to a marriage: the future husband or wife, a guardian, two witnesses, and sight talk. On the other hand, according to Imam Malik, there are four main components to marriage: a guardian, a dowry from the groom, the bride, and *Sighat Taklik* (Aa, 2020). The circumstances for performing *ijab qabul* (proposal acceptance), according to Sayyid Sabiq, include (Pranata & Yunus, 2021): 1) those who will be responsible for carrying out the contract's terms should be competent, level-headed, mature, and able to work independently; 2) the parties are fully entitled to execute the *qabul* and assent; 3) it is important that the *ijab* and *qabul* words do not

contradict one other, unless the guardian offers advantages to the person wearing the ijab; and 4) it is recommended that everyone who wishes to do the ijab and qabul be present in the same assembly and able to comprehend the instructions being given.

In Indonesia, the foundations and conditions for executing a marriage contract are based on the findings that have arisen from opinions among Islamic law experts. The criteria and pillars include: men and women alike are required to be of legal marriageable age, fully grown, and sane; the future bride must be accompanied by a legal guardian; a dowry is something the groom must contribute in order to be paid out after the marriage takes place; the contract must be executed in the presence of two male witnesses who are both fair and Muslims; when both the bride's guardian and the groom's qabul have signed, the contract is finalized, and the dowry sum is mentioned; and the fulfillment of the marital contract should be seen as symbolized by Walimatul 'ursy (gathering activity).

To get official documentation indicating a marriage has taken place, married couples must register it with the Religious Affairs Office. This is parallel to the concept of "*I'tlan Annikah*," marriage registration, as discussed in verse 282 of Surah Al-Imran. Article 7 of the Compilation of Islamic Law and Law No. 1 of 1974, which deals with marriage, both say that this is an order (Ramulyo, 2016). Similarly, according to Article 14 of the Compilation of Islamic Law on the Pillars of Marriage, a marriage procession requires a guardian, two witnesses, a bride and groom, and a contract (*ijab and Kabul*). Afterwards, the conditions for marriage are detailed in paragraphs 15–29 of the Compilation of Islamic Law. The prerequisites for marriage is presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Prerequisites for marriage*

	<b>Prerequisites</b>
Groom	Muslim
	Men who meet certain criteria
	Not related by blood or consanguinity to the bride ( <i>mahram</i> )
	Not while performing the <i>Hajj or Umrah ihram</i>
	Not under duress
	Knowing that the person being appointed as guardian is a legal person
	Understand that the bride is a legal person and is allowed to be married
	When carrying out the contract, he is not in the condition of having four wives who are legal both according to religion and state regulations

Bride	<p>Muslim</p> <p>Women who meet certain criteria</p> <p>Not during the iddah period</p> <p>Not while performing the <i>Hajj or Umrah ihram</i></p> <p>With a willing heart without any coercion unless you are still a girl</p> <p>Not related by blood or consanguinity to the groom (<i>mahram</i>)</p> <p>When carrying out the contract, you don't have the status of having a husband</p>
Guardian	<p>Considered Fair by both men and women</p> <p>Muslim</p> <p>Adult and already puberty</p> <p>Man</p> <p>Not in the power of others (independence)</p> <p>Not a wicked person, not a Muslim, and an apostate</p> <p>Not while performing the Hajj or Umrah ihram</p> <p>Not crazy or of sound mind</p> <p>Of your own accord without anyone's coercion</p> <p>Not someone who goes bankrupt, whose assets are controlled by another party</p>
Witness	<p>Muslim</p> <p>Man</p> <p>Adult and already puberty</p> <p>Not crazy or of sound mind</p> <p>Not in the power of others (independence)</p> <p>Minimum number of 2 (two) people</p> <p>Understand the meaning contained in the contract words (<i>ijab and qabul</i>)</p> <p>As far as possible, do not be blind, deaf or speech impaired</p> <p>One who is considered fair</p> <p>People who have the criteria to be a guardian</p>
Contract (ijab and qabul)	<p>The groom and the bride say <i>Tamyiz</i></p> <p>In the contract, the <i>ijab</i> and <i>qabul</i> must be carried out at the same assembly, apart from that the pronouncement of the <i>ijab</i> and <i>qabul</i> may not be accompanied by another <i>lafadz</i> according to the customs which provide interludes in the pronouncement of the <i>ijab</i> and <i>qabul</i>.</p>

Article 6 of Chapter II of Marriage Law number 1 of 1974 provides the necessary conditions for a marriage to take place, which reads: the wedding must be solemnized with the happy couple's free and informed agreement, without any pressure or interference; a parent's consent is required for a couple to tie the knot if neither of them is 21 years

old; obtaining permission from one living parent or a parent with the potential to provide authorization and blessing is adequate in cases where one parent has passed away or is unable to do so due to circumstances such as sickness; in the event that neither parent is living or able to provide consent for the child's marriage, the guardian or a relative farther down the line of descent may fill that role; in the event that the individuals listed in the previous explanation cannot or do not agree to grant permission, the couple can seek it from the Religious Court in their respective areas; and if no additional regulations are determined by the religious laws of the prospective bride and groom, then the requirements in the explanation above are obligatory on the parties.

A marriage may be legally performed if all parties agree that it is acceptable under the law. However, this can and will alter depending on the specifics of the couple's situation. According to Ratnawaty (2018), majority of academics classify marriage laws into four categories as shown in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Categories of marriage laws*

Category	Description
1	Required if the capability is already present. He is financially secure, physically fit, and has a desire that, if left unchecked, threatens to lead him astray. For the sake of dignity and to prevent infidelity, marriage is necessary. One approach to stay away from haram activities is to get married.
2	Having financial means, good health (both mental and physical), and desire is sunnah. Nevertheless, he managed to control his urges and refrain from infidelity. Even if you believe you can control your desire to do evil deeds, it is still wise to tie the knot under these circumstances.
3	<i>Haram</i> is a marriage condition that, if maintained, will lead to harm. This is because it has long been known that the husband-to-be cannot support his future wife financially or is violent towards her as a result of his substance abuse problems. The point of getting married is to reap advantages in this life and the next (Hermanto, 2022).
4	Even if the husband and wife are legally entitled to marry, it is considered makruh if the pair cannot afford to support the woman's living expenses at this time, regardless of their biological ability. In the same vein, the couple may be financially adequate or excessive, but physiologically, they still lack the ability. This must be considered, as the household's situation will be impacted by this biological and financial handicap, even if it does not directly cause losses. Biological and economic needs that have yet to be satisfied by one or both partners may lead to arguments and conflicts.



In a mubah (permitted) marriage, neither partner feels compelled to tie the knot due to any pressing issues. The ulama (those who are learned) accept this kind of marriage as their foundational rule since it is widespread in society (Gratitude, 2014). The requirements are listed under Article 7 paragraph (3) of the Compilation of Islamic Law for requesting a marriage *itsbat*. The marriage registration that can be submitted to the Religious Court is limited to matters relating to: the existence of a marriage in the context of settling a divorce; loss of marriage certificate; there is doubt about whether one of the conditions of marriage is valid or not; the existence of a marriage that occurred before the enactment of Law No. 1 of 1974; and marriages carried out by those who do not have obstacles to marriage according to Law No. 1 of 1974. According to Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Compilation of Islamic Law, for weddings that took place after 1974 but were not recorded with the Religious Courts, marriage can only be proven by a marriage certificate made by a Marriage Registrar. If a marriage certificate cannot prove the marriage, the marriage itself can be submitted to the Religious Court.

It is possible to apply for a marriage *itsbat* to the Religious Court in order to get a marriage certificate in cases when the bride and groom did not register their marriage. The legality of the petitioners' unregistered marriage must not have violated any laws or failed to meet the criteria of Law Number 1 of 1974 in order for the marriage certificate to be awarded. In accordance with the court ruling, which allowed the petitioners to register their marriage, previously unrecorded unions can now be registered with the Religious Affairs Office's Marriage Registry Officer by presenting a copy of the decision. The Religious Affairs Office will then issue a marriage book, which the petitioners can use to create family cards and get their children's birth certificates, easing the process of enrolling them in school. In short, once the petition is approved and the marriage is registered, the marriage can be legally performed. Legal certainty has been granted to the petitioners as a result of their status as acknowledged genuine or recognized by the state.

By examining the Compilation of Islamic Law's regulations regarding the *itsbat*, or marriage registration, and how these regulations relate to the legalization of unregistered marriages that came into effect after 1974, it depicts how the law changes to meet societal demands and solve societal problems. For example, when a marriage certificate is missing or if there are questions about the legality of the marriage, one might seek a marriage *itsbat*. Legal clarity and protection are given to those impacted by these circumstances because

marriage law acknowledges and reacts to the social dynamics and changes that take place. These laws also address marriages that took place before the passage of Law No. 1 of 1974. They provide answers to questions about the validity of a marriage or its conditions and methods to retrieve lost papers. The purpose of this legislation is to provide a legal framework that recognizes marriage as a genuine connection for people and families, irrespective of the timing of the ceremony.

The Law no. 1 of 1974, the Compilation of Islamic Law, highlights that a marriage can legitimize a relationship that has fulfilled substantive legal requirements, even if it is not procedurally recorded, by allowing the application for a marriage certificate for marriages that were carried out without hindrance. The rights of people and their families will be better protected, and legal clarity will be increased as a result of this (Bahrum, 2013). Articles pertaining to the compilation of Islamic law highlight the significance of official papers in Islamic law and provide a means for parties to apply for a marriage certificate in the context of unregistered weddings that took place after 1974. This system is especially helpful for couples who have married but have not officially registered it, even if they have met all the legal criteria (Bahrum, 2019).

An official marriage certificate provides couples with the peace of mind they need to take charge of their legal matters, including marriage registration and the processing of vital papers like birth certificates and family cards. In terms of social integration and access to public resources, this is vital for the couple's children as well as for the couple themselves.

In general, *Isbat* marriage takes place in a comprehensive and adaptable framework for handling marriage-related matters; compilation of Islamic Law demonstrates how Islamic law responds to modern societal difficulties and demands. The significance of a well-defined legal framework in safeguarding human liberties and societal well-being is underscored by this procedure, which also highlights the function of legislation as a means to attain social fairness and clarity.

#### ***4.2. Legal Consequences after the Determination of Itsbat Marriage***

Equal access to civil and population registration services, as well as population documentation, is a right of every inhabitant. According to Article 2 of Law Number 24 of 2013 regarding Amendments to Law Number 23 of 2006 concerning Population Administration (referred to as Law Number 24 of 2013), this right has been recognized, and in order to obtain it, all residents are required to follow the established procedures and

mechanisms. According to Article 27 of Law No. 24 of 2013, all residents are obligated to notify a technical agency of any birth within 60 days. The report is typically entered into the Birth Certificate Register by the Civil Registry officer upon receipt. The child's birth may still be notified within a year but a District Court ruling is necessary after the first year has elapsed. In this case, both parents' marriage certificates are required to secure a District Court determination on a child's birth certificate. The parents will need to apply to the Religious Court for a marriage certificate if neither of them has one (MH & Hukumonline, 2018). The marriage statute was ratified, which meant that the petitioners' unregistered marriage was considered lawful. In other words, it was retroactive and legally enforceable. As stated in Article 42 of Law Number 1 of the Year 1974, a child of the petitioners can acquire legal status and standing if the petitioners already have children by obtaining a birth certificate attesting to his or her status as a legitimate child of the petitioners. A legitimate child is a child born in or as a result of a valid marriage.

By approving the marriage legislation, the laws governed by Indonesia will already be applicable to the marriage, which has legal ramifications for the husband and wife, any children born of the marriage, and any assets owned by the couple. Several important legal ramifications stem from the decision on marriage law for couples who have previously wed in an unregistered marriage. These ramifications are tightly tied to Indonesian population law and administration, as outlined in the Compilation of Islamic Law and Law Number 24 of 2013 regarding population administration. The legal ramifications of this procedure extend to many facets of social and demographic life, and it also formally registers marriages that were not previously recorded.

Legally recognized marriages that were previously deemed informal are now lawful as of the day the unregistered marriage takes place. Legal certainty is bestowed to the couple and any children born of the marriage by this acknowledgment, which applies retrospectively. Important papers, such as birth certificates for children, are issued as a result of civil registration, which is directly affected by this acknowledgment. According to Article 42 of Law Number 1 of 1974, a birth certificate doubles as a confirmation of a person's legal position as a legitimate child of a married couple, in addition to recording the birth of the individual. Because one's marital status determines one's rights and responsibilities under the law, the marriage certificate's recognition of the marriage's legitimacy is crucial. The validity of the marriage is an important factor in establishing certain rights, such as those pertaining

to inheritance, child custody, and divorce. Couples may complete their marriage certificates with other official papers, such as family cards and child birth certificates, which are significant in many administrative and legal procedures in Indonesia when they approve them. This is done within the framework of population administration (Ramdani Wahyu Sururie, 2017). Having a marriage certificate on file also makes it easier to complete other administrative tasks, such as registering a child's birth.

The legal and social acknowledgment of marriage via the *nikah* ceremony also helps to strengthen the family unit, which in turn gives children born into the union a better chance of success in life. Legal acknowledgment of a child's familial status is necessary for many parts of life, including schooling and inheritance rights, and this is vital for the child's psychological and social well-being (Sanusi, 2016).

The *itsbat* marriage requirement causes both the couple's legal standing and the larger social and administrative framework to undergo extensive and deep changes. It demonstrates the interconnectedness of administrative processes and the law in controlling and shaping social dynamics and stresses the need for legal certainty in laying solid groundwork for families and people.

This certificate is not only proof of marriage's legality, but also an important foundation for determining various rights and obligations related to aspects of social and legal life. It highlights how legal documents interact with the private lives of citizens and how public policy and administration can affect social structures. The marriage certificate acts as a key to access a wide range of legal rights and administrative services, such as inheritance rights, child custody, and ease in administrative procedures like birth registration. The fact that couples need to complete their marriage certificates with other documents, such as family cards and birth certificates, shows the importance of integration between administrative systems. Hence, marriage recognition or lack thereof has a broader impact. For example, without a valid marriage certificate, spouses and their children may face difficulties in accessing educational services, healthcare, and even legal proceedings such as divorce or custody claims. This shows that the marriage certificate is not only an administrative issue but also an important determining point in social justice and equality. The imperatives of marriage and its influence on social and legal structures underscore the complexity of the interaction between customary norms, legal policies, and social dynamics.

The itbat process, which is the legal legalization of marriage, highlights how legal procedures can support or hinder social stability and integration.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, marriages that took place after 1974 but did not have a marriage certificate could still be recognized as valid through the Religious Court's marriage *itsbat* procedure, even though the bride and groom did not comply with the requirement to register their marriage. The applicant's unregistered marriage must be distinct from the law in order for this validation procedure to be completed, which is specifically required by Article 7 paragraph 3 letter e of the Compilation of Islamic Law. The Religious Court may approve the marriage license application if these conditions are satisfied. After the Religious Court decides on the validity of the marriage, all marriages the applicant has previously engaged in serially are fully enforced and regarded as lawful. This legislation recognizes children born from prior marriages as legitimate offspring of lawful marriage and declares such marriages to be legally genuine. By going through this procedure, a previously unrecognized and unregistered relationship may be transformed into a legally recognized union, providing legal protection to both parties and their children in society.

In the context of policy, this suggests the importance of policy revisions that accommodate administrative needs without compromising the social and legal needs of citizens. Policy recommendations may include simplifying the marriage registration process and increasing access to family-related legal services throughout Indonesia. It may also consider strategies to raise awareness about the importance of legal documents in everyday life, strengthen the legal framework that supports the protection of children and family rights, and further integrate administrative services to help families cope with legal and social challenges.

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# Anatomizing Pope Francis' pandemic homilies: Discourse parts and types in focus

<sup>1</sup>Henry E. Lemana II & <sup>2</sup>Virgion H. Mamonong

## Abstract

In times of crisis, the role of religious leaders becomes paramount in providing solace and guidance to their followers. This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Pope Francis' homilies during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their discourse structure and text types. Employing a descriptive-qualitative approach rooted in discourse analysis, the study examines ten randomly selected homilies from an official Vatican compilation. The analysis reveals a consistent structural pattern comprising an introduction, narration, proposition, argumentation, pathetic, refutation, and conclusion. Furthermore, it discerns that the homilies predominantly exhibit characteristics of factual text, particularly the expository genre, elucidating theological insights and offering practical counsel. However, the study acknowledges limitations such as sample size and linguistic constraints, underscoring the need for careful interpretation of findings. These insights highlight the persuasive and pastoral efficacy of religious discourse during crises and emphasize avenues for future research and practical application in crisis communication and pastoral ministry.

**Keywords:** *homilies, Pope Francis, parts and types, discourse analysis*

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## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. PhD in Applied Linguistics, Affiliate Lecturer, University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City, the Philippines. Email: [henrylemana\\_23@yahoo.com](mailto:henrylemana_23@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>PhD in Applied Linguistics, Professor, University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City, the Philippines. Email: [vmamonong@uic.edu.ph](mailto:vmamonong@uic.edu.ph)





## 1. Introduction

In times of distress and tribulation, individuals naturally seek leaders who can provide guidance and inspiration. Research in psychology and sociology has extensively explored the dynamics of leadership in crisis situations, highlighting the critical role leaders play in shaping collective responses and fostering resilience within communities (Lombardi et al., 2021; Southwick et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022). In the same way, various research on charismatic leadership has accentuated the importance of inspirational communication in galvanizing followers and instilling hope amidst adversity (Jamal & Abu Bakar, 2017; Men et al., 2021). With that, Pope Francis, the current head of the Roman Catholic church, assumes the weighty responsibility of shepherding his over a billion followers worldwide in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of distress and tribulation (Weinberg et al., 2020). His pivotal role as a guiding figure during this crisis is underscored by the unique platform his position affords him, enabling the dissemination of solace, wisdom, and moral guidance (Powell, 2017; Sousa, 2020). Previous studies have already highlighted religious leaders' vital role in times of uncertainty, serving as bastions of moral support and fostering communal resilience (Omerovic, 2017; Yibeltal et al., 2024). Thus, the role of Pope Francis as a spiritual leader extends beyond doctrinal teachings to encompass pastoral care and moral leadership, particularly during moments of global upheaval and existential uncertainty. It is also worth noting that his messages of compassion, solidarity, and hope resonate not only with Catholics but also with individuals of diverse faiths and beliefs (Ravitz, 2015), underscoring the universal appeal of moral leadership in times of crisis.

These messages of compassion, solidarity, and hope could be delivered through homilies, the primary medium through which Pope Francis communicates his teachings and offers spiritual guidance (Powell, 2017; Sousa, 2020). During liturgies (i.e., the public rites of the Catholic church), priests (e.g., the pope) often give sermons called homilies that have a religious, spiritual, or moral theme (Powell, 2017) which is "a vivid and joyful experience of the spirit, a consoling holy discourse with God's word, and a continual source of renewal and advancement," as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Fernandes, 2015). Rooted in centuries-old tradition, homilies serve as a means of imparting divine teachings and inspiring believers to lead virtuous lives (Broadus, 2014; Buchiu, 2022; Lemana, 2023). Serving as exhortations of the word of God and conduits for spiritual enlightenment and transformation, homilies offer believers a pathway to encounter the divine, find solace in

times of distress, and embark on a journey of personal and communal renewal (Brockhaus, 2020; Reis, 2020). Hence, as integral components of liturgical worship, homilies embody religious teachings' wisdom and enduring relevance, inspiring believers to live lives of faith, integrity, and compassion.

Despite the extensive scholarship on religious discourse, there remains a notable gap in the analysis of Pope Francis' pandemic homilies in terms of discourse structure and text types. While numerous linguists have examined religious communication using diverse theoretical frameworks and textual corpora (see Adedun & Mekiliuwa, 2009; Capaldi, 2017; Ferrara, 2014; Guzik, 2018; Hopkins, 2010; Karanja, 2014; Mansouri et al., 2017; Szudrowicz-Gartska, 2012), studies have yet to be undertaken by systematically investigating organization of discourse parts and the identification of text types in the homilies delivered by a religious leader during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This qualitative discourse study aimed to bridge this gap by comprehensively analyzing Pope Francis' pandemic homilies. By analyzing the sequence of discourse parts such as introduction, narration, proposition, argumentation, refutation, and conclusion, we can discern how Pope Francis constructs his messages to convey moral teachings and offer spiritual guidance to his followers. This understanding is crucial for grasping the effectiveness of his leadership and pastoral care during the pandemic. Furthermore, studying the types of homilies delivered by Pope Francis provides valuable information about the content and focus of his messages during the COVID-19 crisis. Different types of homilies may serve varying purposes and address specific spiritual needs of the faithful. By identifying the predominant text types used by Pope Francis, we can gain insights into the motifs and theological perspectives emphasized in his homilies. This knowledge enables us to assess the relevance and applicability of his teachings to the contemporary challenges faced by individuals and communities affected by the pandemic. Moreover, understanding the organization and text types of Pope Francis' homilies during the pandemic contributes to broader scholarly inquiries into religious discourse and leadership in times of crisis. This knowledge enhances our understanding of religious rhetoric and pastoral ministry and informs interdisciplinary efforts to promote social cohesion, ethical leadership, and collective resilience in the face of global challenges.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the supposition of Toczydowski (1949) in his study which delved into the structural composition of the homilies of St. Chrysostom. For him, every speech, whether sacred or profane, in order to be called “successful” must be built up of the following parts: introduction or exordium (the part of the speech where the speaker introduces himself or his topic, or where he draws the audience's attention so that they are receptive and open to learning what he has to say); narration or explanation (the part of the speech where the speaker provides background information or defends his stance.); the proposition (where a statement or assertion that expresses a judgement or opinion is declared or implied); the argumentation or proofs (typically follows a framework that divides the arguments into distinct sections and may be followed by a restatement of those sections); the pathetic (it is where the speaker may do the stirring of the passions); the refutations (it is where he answers any remaining objections or difficulties before concluding); and the conclusion or peroration (it is the wrapping up stage used to rouse the crowd's enthusiasm). Notwithstanding, Toczydowski (1949) asserts that while all these parts may occur in one speech, they need not all occur nor strictly occur in the order he presented. Accordingly, when it is important to clear away prejudices or misconceptions, a part, or even the whole of the refutation may be placed right after the introduction. Also, the pathetic may occur almost anywhere, and even several times in the same speech (Toczydowski, 1949).

Moreover, to analyze the text types of the homilies being studied, it is imperative that a text is well elucidated. According to Wilson (2012), a text is a constructed object. It is innately communicative and is part of an ongoing discourse produced, received, and interpreted by various social actors and agents (Rhiney, 2010). Isnaini (2014) refers text to as any written record of a communicative event that may involve oral language like in a sermon or homily, a casual conversation, a shopping transaction, or written language like in a poem, a newspaper, advertisement, a novel, etc. Furthermore, it consists of more than one sentence, and these sentences combine to form a meaningful whole to convey a complete message (Lee, 2001; Isnaini, 2014). Anderson and Anderson (1998) state that texts are pieces of spoken or written language created for a particular purpose, and can be classified into

different types that share certain structural and functional elements that have developed conventionalized patterns with a high level of usage. These types – literary and factual – are assigned on the basis of external criteria such as intended audience, purpose, and activity type, that is, it refers to a conventional, culturally recognized grouping of texts (Lee, 2001).

A literary text is defined as a wide variety of creative writing that leads to the appreciation of the cultural heritages and covers those spoken and written texts that explore and interpret human experience, usually in such a way as to evoke in the reader or listener a reflective, imaginative and/or emotional response (Isnaini, 2014). Furthermore, a literary text may be a narrative, drama, and response text. According to Rebecca (2003), the narrative text type is a tool to help humans to organize their ideas and explore new ideas and experiences in the forms of novels, short stories, myths, legends, science fiction, fantasy, fables, cartoons, stage plays, film scripts, television scripts, radio scripts, role plays, letters, and conversations. This text type may consist of four parts: orientation, complication, resolution, and conclusion (Isnaini, 2014). Meanwhile, drama is a literary text that depicts action via dialogues of acting characters and authorial notes, i.e., description of the physical action of actors, place and time circumstances, etc. (Isnaini, 2014). It could be in a form of film scripts, daytime dramas, plays, improvised performances, and street theatre. Last but not least, the response text is used to describe a written piece that offers an individual's response (judgment, opinion, reaction) to a piece of literature, such as a book, film, or poem (Anderson & Anderson, 1998; Isnaini, 2014).

The second main type of text according to Anderson and Anderson (1998) is called a factual text like an explanation, procedure, exposition, information report, recount, and discussion. Isnaini (2014) refers to factual texts as those texts that present information, ideas, or issue so as to inform, instruct, and enlighten the reader or listener. An explanation is a text which explains processes relating to forming of natural, social, scientific, and cultural phenomena (Anderson & Anderson, 1998). On the other hand, the procedure is a text that shows a process in sequence from beginning to end. It is used to indicate how something gets finished by going through a series of steps in sequential order, which is its social function. The term "instruction text" is frequently used to refer to this type of document (Anderson & Anderson, 1998). Meanwhile, another kind of factual literature is known as an exposition. It is utilized in the process of advancing or justifying an argument, as well as in the

presentation of a certain point of view; hence, the act of stating one's viewpoint with regard to a matter and arguing one's case for or against it is known as exposition. Text types such as advertising, editorials, debates delivered orally, and legal defenses are all examples of exposition (Isnaini, 2014). Another factual text is called an information report. Anderson and Anderson (1998) state that an information report is a piece of text that presents information about a subject. Its purpose is to categorize and/or characterize the subject by making use of data regarding the subject's components, actions, and characteristics. In addition, a recount is another kind of factual literature that is a piece of writing that retells past events, most of the time in the order in which they took place (Djuharie, 2008). Its social function is to provide the audience with a description of what occurred and when it occurred. Lastly, a discussion is a sort of factual text that is used to investigate a subject from more than one point of view. In this section, the arguments and supporting evidence for each of the perspectives are presented to arrive at a conclusion (Anderson & Anderson, 1998; Isnaini, 2014).

## *2.2. Analysis of religious discourses*

Previous studies showed that there have been analyses of religious discourses like homilies and sermons that provide various methodological insights and employ different analytical frameworks. For example, Hopkins (2010) determined the patterns of meaning in the sermon language of women preachers, recognized the struggle of women preachers, and noted how that struggle might be reflected in their lives and work. Examining the sermon language of women preachers and looking for patterns of meaning evident in the language employed by the women preachers as they attempted to adapt to the traditionally male-dominated occupation of preaching, Hopkins (2010) concluded that each of these women preachers utilized narrative structure, and that women preachers utilized their sermon language to construct significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, sign systems, and knowledge.

Employing a socio-pragmatic study about the discourse of Friday sermon in Indonesia, Saddhono (2011) analyzed the structure of the sermon's discourse, the selection and composition of its topics, the form and functions of its codes and code-switching, the form of its speech acts, and the characteristics of its language and specific terms. The study revealed that the Friday sermon contained oral discourse, which had a regular and typical structure; the strategies of the composition of the topics included quotation, storytelling, and

use of popular expressions; the forms of the codes and code-switching involved Arabic, Indonesian, Javanese, and English languages; the utterances of the sermon contained all forms of speech acts; various terms appeared in the sermons indicating that the Friday sermon functioned as a register or usage of language in a particular field. In the same way, studying the conversational features and discourse strategies in select sermons of a pastor from Nigeria, Akhimien and Farotimi (2018) presented findings of their study showing that the sermons were characterized by conversational features such as feedback (call-response, adjacency pairs, openings and closings), repair mechanism, and selection of next speaker. The study further revealed the presence of non-verbal conversational features such as pauses, smiles, laughter, and raising of the hands and head. The study concluded that the speaker carefully combined these features to enhance his audience involvement and to trigger his desired response from the audience.

Adam (2017), in his study with a focus on using credible persuasion in religious discourses, i.e., sermons, claimed that although persuasion seemed to be present in virtually all text types and registers, in many ways, it was the religious discourse that utilized persuasion as one of its pivotal instruments to convince the audience of the veracity of the doctrine presented through it. His paper explored scripted sermons, particularly sermon titles and opening passages, in terms of the persuasive strategies employed. The main emphasis was placed on how particular linguistic realizations of persuasion enhanced the credibility of the message. In the same manner, Essuman (2016) presented a pragmatic analysis of Ghanaian Anglican sermons. Examining how meaning was conveyed and interpreted in sermonic discourse, the study revealed that background assumptions and knowledge shared by preachers and congregations in sermon delivery accounted for how meaning was constructed and inferred by participants in the discourse. It was concluded that the interpretation of meaning in sermon delivery was not determined by linguistic contexts only nor dependent on textual resources; rather, it was dependent on other situational and contextual factors.

Meanwhile, to parse the structure of a religious discourse of Pope John Paul II, Szudrowicz-Garstka (2012) employed a discourse analysis to examine one of the pope's homilies addressed to young people in Toronto, Canada in 2002, during the celebration of World Youth Days. The study also aimed to provide a brief insight into understanding discourse and present a suitable tool for its investigation. The findings showed that the

homily and its structure could be described using the application of ten case markers, i.e., situationality, emotions, recent history, remote history, general knowledge, juxtapositions, direct intertextuality, guidelines, dangers, and teaching. Using the same research approach to analyzing texts, Karanja (2014), focusing on Catholic homilies from Queen of Apostles Seminary Church in Ruaraka Nairobi, conducted a discourse study whose aim was to find out what made disparate sentences hang together as well as the tools used by homilists to knit together their messages. Further, the study also aimed to find out the role of the topic as a coherence principle and how the principle organized the speech into a coherent whole, as well as to assess how meaning was conveyed in concrete situations. The study found that topic was the strongest coherence principle used by homilists to achieve relevance and by the congregation to interpret what as relevant and what was not relevant. The study recommended a further study on the relevance of prosody in homilies.

On the other hand, the sermons of selected Pentecostal churches in Lagos were considered by Ekeoha (2015) as the corpora in examining the linguistic forms and functions of rhetorical strategies and their persuasive value in these religious discourses, with the aim of the study which was to understand the language of Nigerian Pentecostalism fully. Data showed that metaphors, rhetorical questions, and proverbs were the linguistically explicated forms of rhetorical strategies for persuasion in Nigerian Pentecostal sermons. It was recommended that awareness of these linguistic forms was essential for an understanding of the language and rhetoric of Nigerian Pentecostalism.

This review of related literature, although insightful, brings out a conspicuous gap in the scholarship concerning Pope Francis' pandemic homilies, particularly in terms of discourse structure and text types. Despite the abundance of research on religious discourse, there is a distinct absence of systematic analyses focusing on the organization of discourse parts and the identification of text types within the homilies delivered by Pope Francis amid the COVID-19 pandemic. While previous studies have explored religious communication utilizing various theoretical frameworks and textual corpora, the specific examination of Pope Francis' homilies during this critical period remains underexplored. This gap highlights the need for research to fill this void and provide insights into how Pope Francis communicates with his global audience during times of crisis.

### 3. Methodology

Discourse analysis (DA) served as the research methodology for this study's descriptive-qualitative approach. DA conducts a deep and thorough investigation of the transmission of information since it attempts to characterize and explain language events in emotions, cognitions, situations, and cultures. (Budd, 2005; Gee, 2005).

Pope Francis's homilies given during the pandemic served as the corpus for this analysis. These homilies were taken from an e-book titled *Strong in the Face of Tribulation: The Church in Communion - A Sure Support in Time of Trial*. The selection of this e-book was based on its status as the official compilation of the Pope's pandemic homilies. As reported by Brockhaus (2020), this e-book encompasses Pope Francis' homilies, prayers, and other messages delivered from March 9 to May 18, 2020, throughout the coronavirus lockdown in Italy. Published by the Vatican and edited by the Dicastery for Communication of the Holy See, it serves as a record of the Pope's communications during this unprecedented period. Additionally, Reis (2020) highlighted in Vatican News that the aforementioned e-book aims to provide a small gesture of assistance to everyone, guiding them in recognizing and embracing God's presence and compassion amidst pain, suffering, solitude, and fear.

The study commenced with the approval of protocol AL-GS 35-12-2020 by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) at the University of the Immaculate Conception in Davao City, Philippines. Subsequently, the researchers acquired the e-book. To qualify as a corpus for analysis, a homily must have been delivered by the Pope during the pandemic and possess an official English translation. A bowl containing strips of paper bearing the titles of all eligible homilies was prepared; from these, 10 were chosen at random out of 24. Fugard and Potts (2015) referenced research by Braun and Clarke (2013), who suggested that 10 texts would suffice for discourse analysis. Each randomly selected homily was assigned a unique code, and their sentences were numerically segmented for analytical purposes.

This study considered Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to qualitative data analysis. Their framework consists of three essential components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drafting and verification. In particular, the process began with data reduction, where the researchers randomly selected 10 homilies. The chosen homilies were then subjected to numerical segmentation for analytical purposes, facilitating the



organization and categorization of the data. Subsequently, each homily was carefully analyzed for discourse parts and types vis-à-vis the theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Finally, the researchers synthesized the data to draw meaningful conclusions. This process involved cross-referencing the findings with established theoretical frameworks and engaging intercoders in applied linguistics to ensure the accuracy and validity of the analysis. The researchers also employed a reflective commentary method to document personal insights, emerging patterns, and theoretical justifications throughout the analysis process. Ultimately, these steps culminated in the formulation of comprehensive conclusions that shed light on the structure parts and types of Pope Francis' pandemic homilies.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

**Table 1**  
*Structural Composition of Pope Francis' Pandemic Homilies*

Structure Elements	Indicator	Description	Sample Excerpt & Source
Parts of the Discourse	Introduction/ Exordium	Relation to the Topic/ Scripture	Last Sunday we celebrated the Lord's resurrection; today we witness the resurrection of His disciple. It has already been a week, a week since the disciples had seen the Risen Lord... (H6S19AET)
	Narration/ Explanation	Facts about the Subject and the Position	What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief? He returns and, standing in the same place... In life we go forward tentatively, uncertainly, like a toddler... (H6S19AET)
	Proposition	Assertion/ Judgment/ Opinion	The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground... (H6S19AET)
	Argumentation/ Proofs	Outlined Supporting Details	Let us go back to the disciples... Thomas can now touch them and know of Jesus' love... In those wounds, he touches with his hands God's tender closeness... There, every doubt is resolved... (H6S19AET)
	Pathetic	Passions/ Virtues	We need the Lord, who sees beyond that frailty an irrepressible beauty... (H6S19AET)
	Refutations	Objections/ Difficulties	You may object: "But I keep falling!" ... (H6S19AET)
	Conclusion/ Peroration	Appeals & Invitations	To everyone: let us not think only of our interests, our vested interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to prepare for our collective future... (H6S19AET)
Text Type	Factual Text	Exposition	It takes three things to make a true prayer. The first is faith... The second condition that Jesus teaches us is perseverance... And the third thing that God wants in prayer is courage... (H3M23ML)

### *Parts of the Discourse*

To present a methodical examination of the overall structure of the homilies, the sixth homily, as an example, is deconstructed below:

*Last Sunday we celebrated the Lord's resurrection; today we witness the resurrection of his disciple. It has already been a week, a week since the disciples had seen the Risen Lord, but in spite of this, they remained fearful, cringing behind "closed doors", unable even to convince Thomas, the only one absent, of the resurrection. (H6S19AET)*

This passage represents the brief exordium of the sixth homily. Here, Pope Francis affirms that the introductory portion of the homily will garner the favorable attention of the congregation or audience. He does so by citing Easter Sunday, the most significant event in the Christian calendar since it marks the resurrection of Jesus from the grave and the eradication of sin and death forever. This is done to attract the attention of the audience, rather than to enlighten them. He then transitions to a second episode involving Thomas, a biblical character who appears to play an important role in the sermon.

The following statements from H6S19AET comprise the next part – the narration or explanation. In the following lines, Pope Francis exemplifies the use of scriptural reference by illustrating the connection between the Scripture quoted and the topic of the sermon. He employs the device *dialektikon*, that is, he begins with a question and then elaborates on the response. This allows him to demonstrate how the subject of the homily is developed from the text and how it relates to the text. Consider the following excerpts:

*What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief? He returns and, standing in the same place, "in the midst" of the disciples, He repeats his greeting: "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19, 26). He starts all over. The resurrection of His disciple begins here, from this faithful and patient mercy, from the discovery that God never tires of reaching out to lift us up when we fall... (H6S19AET)*

In the following stage, Pope Francis makes a clear proclamation of his idea or the primary move he intends to make – a proposition. It is the method by which the Pope initiates the process of ventilating the message of the Scripture and making it relevant to the audience by means of a declaration or an assertion that reflects his judgment based on the passages that have been read. In H6S19AET, the proposition states:

*The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground and that in order to keep walking, we need to be put back on our feet.*  
(H6S19AET)

The statement, which includes the proposition of the discourse, acts as the transition stage before Pope Francis introduces the body of the homily, which includes the component argumentations or proofs. The proposition is contained within the statement. This maneuver brings together the premise with the primary body of the homily, so keep that in mind as you read on. However, the pope opts to not reveal the body immediately as he presents first a refutation. Here, he shows the use of the device prokatalipsis, wherein he manifests anticipation of objections and to which he then gives a response by using counterarguments. Observe the following statements:

*You may object: “But I keep falling!” The Lord knows this and He is always ready to raise you up. He does not want us to keep thinking about our failings; rather, He wants us to look to him. For when we fall, He sees children needing to be put back on their feet; in our failings, he sees children in need of his merciful love...*  
(H6S19AET)

The main body of the homily that encompasses the use of argumentation or proofs follows. As mentioned in the introduction, Thomas appears to have been the core of the message. Here, Pope Francis makes it appear that Thomas’s experience with Jesus is a perfect scenario to exemplify the mercy of God that is able to lift his people during times of fear and doubt:

*Let us go back to the disciples... To them, who were wounded within, he shows his own wounds. Thomas can now touch them and*

*know of Jesus' love and how much Jesus had suffered for him, even though he had abandoned Him. In those wounds, he touches with his hands God's tender closeness. Thomas arrived late, but once he received mercy, he overtook the other disciples: he believed not only in the resurrection but in the boundless love of God. And he makes the most simple and beautiful profession of faith: "My Lord and my God!" ... There, every doubt is resolved; there, God becomes my God; there, we begin to accept ourselves and to love life as it is. (H6S19AET)*

The most moving part of the discourse follows after the argumentations or proofs are presented. The elaborate and insightful manner of stirring the passions intensifies the essence of this part – the pathetic. In conjunction with the points explicated in the main body of the homily, Pope Francis accentuates a few relevant passions, starting off with fear. He points out that in the middle of human trials presently being experienced, the Lord sees our situation and we are able to appreciate his goodness and feel joy:

*Dear brothers and sisters, in the time of trial that we are presently undergoing, we too, like Thomas, with our fears and our doubts, have experienced our frailty. We need the Lord, who sees beyond that frailty an irrepressible beauty... As the Letter of Peter said, this is a reason for being "filled with joy, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials". (H6S19AET)*

The passions, like love and compassion towards others, specifically during the present pandemic the world is recuperating from, are also significantly particularized:

*Now, while we are looking forward to a slow and arduous recovery from the pandemic, there is a danger that we will forget those who are left behind. The risk is that we may then be struck by an even worse virus, that of selfish indifference. A virus spread by the thought that life is better if it is better for me and that everything will be fine if it is fine for me. It begins there and ends up selecting one person over another, discarding the poor, and*

*sacrificing those left behind on the altar of progress. The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer... This is not some ideology: it is Christianity. (H6S19AET)*

In the final part of his discourse, Pope Francis delivers the conclusion, also known as the peroration, which is the section of a speech that is intended to excite the audience. This section is reflected in the sentences that follow in the form of a powerful impression. Instead of presenting any novel concepts, Pope Francis highlights and confirms the experience that Thomas had while contrasting it with the state of affairs in the world today.

*In that community, after the resurrection of Jesus, only one was left behind and the others waited for him. Today the opposite seems to be the case: a small part of the human family has moved ahead, while the majority has remained behind. (H6S19AET)*

He then injects a refutation to the implication of the above-mentioned statements and cites St. Faustina's experience of talking with the Lord to address the objection:

*Each of us could say: "These are complex problems, it is not my job to take care of the needy, others have to be concerned with it!" Saint Faustina, after meeting Jesus, wrote: "In a soul that is suffering we should see Jesus on the cross, not a parasite and a burden... She said, "Lord, they often abuse my goodness". And Jesus replied: "Never mind, don't let it bother you, just be merciful to everyone always" ... (H6S19AET)*

In the end, appeals to the audience or applications are used as punctuation throughout Pope Francis' sixth homily. This section consists of a petition or an entreaty to personally respond to the truth in a way that will be acceptable to God. This is the step that brings the wisdom and understanding that the homily imparts to the listener's consciousness. The homily's dénouement goes:

*To everyone: let us not think only of our interests, our vested interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to*

*prepare for our collective future... let us accept mercy, the salvation of the world. And let us show mercy to those who are most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world.*  
(H6S19AET)

A magnanimous Pope Francis is inviting the audience to disregard selfishness, and encouraging them to embrace the present situation as an avenue to show kindness and empathy. Here, he mentions again Thomas that like him, may mercy be received by others as well, and the same must be shared with the rest of the world.

It is realized throughout the course of the study that to compose a homily, the following are its fundamental parts: introduction or exordium, narration or explanation, proposition, argumentation or proofs, pathetic or stirring of the passion/s, refutation, and conclusion or peroration. Furthermore, the findings reveal that in the homilies of Pope Francis, the introduction functions as the brief exordium of the discourses. Pope Francis uses this section to captivate listeners rather than to impart information. According to Beng (2007), an effective opening serves two purposes: attracting new listeners and getting the congregation excited about the sermon. For Cheong (1996) and Alamis (2013), this section piques the listeners' interest, gets their thoughts in order, and wins the favor for the preacher.

Narration or explanation also appears to be another part found in all of the homilies of the Holy Father. The sixth homily projects how the bridging of the read passages (most especially the Gospel) and the subject of the homily is done. Through the use of a captivating question and an immediate answer, Pope Francis is able to narrate certain points from the readings and eventually explain his position, a part he also used to intensify the audience's attention. Bozant (2019) writes that since the word "homily" means "explanation" in Greek, it must essentially comprise a part wherein there is a drawing out of the meaning of the passages in Scripture, and then applying these meanings to the current situation in which the faithful find themselves. Alamis (2013) adds that since most homilies want to get the attention of the audience, the usual strategy is to include the listeners in narrating a particular situation, a move that attempts to gain the involvement of the audience.

A proposition is one part of the homilies of Pope Francis which is considered the main teaching and thrust of the religious discourse, i.e., homily. As presented, Pope Francis

is directly stating his proposition that it is the hand of God that provides his people with mercy – mercy that will sustain their strength and their reason to go on in life. In his homilies, Pope Francis, the supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church and the church's primary educator on matters of faith and morals, is able to make authoritative claims about the relevance of the readings to the lives of the audience. Alamis (2013) in a study finds out that in a homily, a proposition, which she labels the 'central move' in the text, is a vital process used by the preacher by which the message of the Scripture used is made relevant to the audience. With the same contention, other authors like Mead (2008), White (2017), Hughes (2018), and Bozant (2019) insist on the essentiality of a proposition in every sermon or homily. For them, a proposition is the summary of the preacher's message or the essence of the sermon derived directly from the summary of the text of Scripture by the sermon is driven. Meanwhile, argumentation is another essential part of the homilies of the Holy Father. Here, he presents proof to elucidate his proposition. For example, he cites the experience of Thomas's experience with Jesus' appearance after the resurrection and describes it as God's tender closeness and boundless love. He makes it clear through this example that this part of the discourse is the deepening method a preacher uses in order to provide details and heighten his point of view regarding the stated proposition. It is through this move that the proposition is united with the main part of the homily, according to Toczydowski (1949). Furthermore, it is a means of persuading an audience to follow the priest's claim based on the Scripture, as how Cheong (1996) and Alamis (2013) explain it. Consequently, Brown (2003) and Youngkwang (2018) assert that argumentation is greatly important in preaching as it lays the foundation for the audience to respond to the truth of the Bible.

The *pathetic* is another part of the discourse found in Pope Francis' homilies. Pope Francis utilizes this part to bring out and deliver passions to his audience like love and compassion. These passions imply that the Holy Father uses the most moving part of the discourse – the *pathetic* – to present in an elaborate and insightful manner the passions, values, or moral teachings communicated in words and images familiar to the congregation. The *pathetic*, as a part of the discourse, intensifies the purpose of delivering a homily before an audience. As for Powell (2017) and Sousa (2020), a homily is a reflection or a moral exhortation that challenges, informs, directs, and brings Scripture to bear on the real lives of

God's people. Landry (2020) supports that through these values, a homily does not just give "us something to think about, or to lead us to make a minor change in our life – it is to form us to become more like Jesus Christ and bring about the heart-to-heart dialogue between God and his people." Also, the results of the research show that the *pathetic* can be used virtually anywhere, and even multiple times inside the same sentence. It means that in other homilies, the *pathetic* was also found after the introduction, in the argumentation, or even in the conclusion. These results constitute justification for the framework of Toczydlowski (1949) which suggests that passions may be highlighted anywhere in a homily.

On the other hand, refutation is demonstrated in the homilies of Pope Francis through the use of *prokatalipsis*, through which he responds to an anticipated objection with the use of counterarguments, which are based on the Scriptures rather than on human reasoning. By presenting refutations in his homilies, Pope Francis shows mastery of the points he wants to convey, competence in the manner through which he is to deliver the homilies, and brilliance in thinking "beyond the box". According to Illie (2009), in order to successfully refute an argument, the speaker must first have a thorough comprehension of the argument on all levels, including its literal meaning and its pragmatic implicatures. Moreover, results also reveal that refutations, like the *pathetic*, could also appear anywhere in the discourse, even right after the introduction when it is important to clear away prejudices or misconceptions, as Toczydlowski (1949) asserts. Likewise, the findings of the study back Nordquist's (2019) assertion that in a speech or an essay, a refutation can be found in the first body paragraphs, the middle body paragraphs, or the last. This indicates that the refutation part could be placed wherever it makes the most sense in the text's logical structure.

Considered the ending of a homily, a conclusion or peroration comes logically last in the homilies. Pope Francis concludes his homilies by offering practical applications of the gospel and praying that his listeners may respond appropriately to the truth in order to serve God. In the same vein, this section serves to restate the significance of the truths presented in the homily by providing a concise summary of the main points. In consonance with the study of Alamis (2013), a conclusion entails an entreaty to signify an appeal and worship to God, and an invitation to conversion. Moreover, the conclusion of the homily succeeds when it inspires a response, i.e., not a verbal response, and makes an offer for the future (Beng, 2007; Landry, 2020).



In general, this study is an attestation that a homily of Pope Francis may consist of the following parts: introduction or exordium, narration or explanation, proposition, argumentation or proofs, pathetic or stirring of the passion/s, refutation, and conclusion or peroration, though not strictly arranged in the given order. Nevertheless, Cheong (1996) and Alamis (2013) contest that no typical pattern or sequence of the sermons is defined; the organization of the parts has been found to be rather dependent on the topic and length of the sermons.

### *Text Type*

Pope Francis in his homilies so in effect, could create a sense of connection with his audience made use of the most apposite text type to be considered. Texts are composed for a wide range of reasons, each of which calls for a unique compositional structure and set of criteria to follow. Text types are another name for these various kinds of written expression. There are two primary text types, namely literary and factual, and several text types fall under each of these two categories.

After the sedulous scrutiny of the sample homilies of Pope Francis, results show that all of them are generally categorized as factual texts. It has been determined that H1S3MET all the way up through H10F27ML have provided information, thoughts, or difficulties with the intention of informing, instructing, and enlightening the audience. To be more particular, it has been determined by everyone that the homilies are expository in character. Each of Pope Francis' homilies is an example of the expositional genre of nonfiction writing, in which the author explains and provides evidence to support an argument or stance (spoken or implied) with respect to a section or passages from a particular day's mass readings. Excerpts from H3M23ML are an exposition of the Scripture that interprets and applies particular passages in the readings. In the following sample statements, Pope Francis, based on the amalgamation of the themes in the readings, clearly states his proposition first, that is, there are requisites to compose a "true prayer", then elaborates each of these requisites in the body. The third homily conveys:

*It takes three things to make a true prayer. The first is faith... Faith in prayer... The first condition for true prayer is faith. The second condition that Jesus teaches us is perseverance... Faith and*

*perseverance go together because if you have faith, it is sure that the Lord will grant you what you ask. And the third thing that God wants in prayer is courage. Someone might think: it takes courage to pray and to stay before the Lord. It does... This virtue of courage is so necessary, not only for apostolic action but also for prayer. (H3M23ML)*

Another example to present an exposition is found in H1 which states:

*Jesus is the shepherd – this is how Peter sees Him – who comes to save, to save the sheep which had gone astray: they were us... The good shepherd listens to the flock, guides the flock, takes care of the flock... He was meek. One of the signs of the good Shepherd is meekness. The good Shepherd is meek... He has something to hide, because meekness makes itself seen as it is, without defending itself. In addition, a good shepherd is tender; he has that tenderness of closeness, he knows the sheep one by one, by name, and he takes care of each one as if it were the only one, to the point that when he returns home tired after a day of work, and realises that one is missing, he goes out to work again in search of that one, and carries it back home with him, on his shoulders... (H1S3MET)*

The same manner to present an exposition is observed in H9F8MET. In the said homily, Pope Francis puts forwards a position, presents points about it, and explains them. He is observed to have detailed the meaning of the readings. As so, he sheds light on the Bible's meaning by elucidating its literal text or deducing its full import from its original setting. Consider the compressed excerpts from H9F8MET:

*They are the three paths of the consolation of the Lord... The Lord consoles in closeness. And He does not use empty words; on the contrary, He prefers silence... A second path of Jesus' closeness, of Jesus' way of consoling, is the truth: Jesus is truthful... He tells the truth... He says so simply and gently, without wounding... And*

*this is the third movement. Jesus consoles in hope... He is the first to go and open the doors, the doors to that place, through which we will all pass, at least we hope... This is the truth: it is a bad moment, of danger, of death. But do not let your heart be troubled, stay in that peace – that peace – that is the basis of every consolation. (H9F8MET)*

As expositions, the homilies of Pope Francis provide his audience with the view wherein the passages in the readings are truthfully interpreted, with consideration given to both its immediate and broader biblical contexts through citing other verses related to the theme and fortifying them with applicable and relatable human scenarios.

In consideration of the findings, it is revealed that all homilies of the Holy Father in this study unanimously fall under one type of text according to the taxonomy of Anderson and Anderson (1998). In his desire to build a connection with his audiences through his language in the homilies, Pope Francis utilizes a factual text type, more purposely and precisely, in a form of an exposition. An exposition persuades a reader or listener by presenting an argument or a proposition. By taking a point of view and justifying it, the speaker asserts it (Efendi et al., 2018; Islami et al., 2018; Kurniawati & Kurniawan, 2017; Muslimin, 2019). In view of that, all of the Holy Father's homilies contain the essential ingredients or elements in order for them to be expositional in nature, manifested by advancing and justifying his arguments, putting forward a particular point of view, and stating a position or proposition supported by proofs with respect to the passages from the readings. From these findings, what could be deduced is that Pope Francis, through expository texts, assures that his points in every homily are derived from the readings, with the most gravity given to the Gospel. Therefore, in most cases, the text type to which homilies belong allows the message to find its sole source in Scripture. More specifically, the message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis in order to convince his audience, with whom he wants them to empathize with the emotions and reasons, and to support the action. Indeed, a homily or a sermon exposes biblical truth by expounding the Scriptures (Allen, 2017; Stott, 1982). Here, the expositor is also an exegete — one who analyzes the text carefully and objectively. In the same vein, preachers are expositors who willingly stay within the boundaries of the text and do not leave until they have surveyed its

entirety with its hearers (Chapell, 2005; Raymond, 2017). Furthermore, through expository preaching, the discourse explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture, and takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible, and therefore calls for attention to be given to biblical doctrine and ensures the highest level of biblical knowledge for the congregation (Charles, 2020; Dever & Gilbert, 2012; Keller, 2016; MacArthur, 2005; Merida, 2016; Mohler, 2008).

## **5. Conclusion**

In light of the findings regarding the structure of Pope Francis' pandemic homilies and their text types, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the analysis of homily structure reveals a consistent pattern across Pope Francis' discourses. The homilies typically comprise several key parts: introduction, narration, proposition, argumentation, pathetic, refutation, and conclusion. While these parts may not always follow a strictly sequential order, they collectively serve to captivate the audience's attention, explain the scriptural passages, present the main teaching, provide evidence, evoke emotions, address objections, and conclude with practical applications. This structured approach allows Pope Francis to communicate his messages during times of crisis. Secondly, the examination of text types demonstrates that Pope Francis' homilies predominantly fall under the category of factual texts, specifically expository in nature. Each homily serves to inform, instruct, and enlighten the audience by explaining and supporting arguments or stances with reference to passages from the daily mass readings. The use of a factual, expository style denotes that Pope Francis is able to deliver authoritative teachings grounded in scripture, guiding believers in their faith and moral journey.

This study then contributes to the theoretical understanding of religious discourse, providing scholars with insights into the organization of homilies and their textual characteristics. This understanding can drive further research in fields such as linguistics, religious studies, and communication, enriching academic discourse on the dynamics of religious communication and its impact on believers. Practically, the findings can be applied in pastoral care settings, empowering religious leaders to enhance their sermon delivery and better address the spiritual and emotional needs of their congregations. By adopting a structured approach similar to Pope Francis', clergy members can effectively provide guidance, solace, and encouragement to their communities, especially during challenging

times. Finally, the identification of text types and discourse structures in Pope Francis' homilies can serve as educational resources for faith communities. By studying and reflecting on these homilies, believers can deepen their understanding of scripture, strengthen their faith, and find guidance for navigating life's challenges. Overall, these findings extend beyond academic discourse, offering practical insights and resources for religious leaders, communities, and individuals seeking guidance and inspiration in times of crisis.

While this study sheds light on the structural composition and text types of Pope Francis' homilies, several limitations must be considered. Firstly, the analysis was confined to a specific set of homilies delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Moreover, the subjective nature of discourse analysis and text classification introduces the possibility of interpretational bias, despite efforts to maintain consistency. Additionally, the reliance on English translations may have overlooked nuances present in the original languages, and the modest sample size limits the breadth of insights. Furthermore, the study's focus on structural elements neglects broader socio-cultural and theological contexts that could enrich our understanding of religious discourse. Moving forward, addressing these limitations in future research through larger and more diverse samples, multilingual analyses, and contextualized approaches could offer a more comprehensive understanding of religious communication dynamics.

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# The mediating role of Narcissism in the relationship between self-esteem and aggression of university students in Sagaing Township, Myanmar

<sup>1</sup>Khin Khin Khant & <sup>2</sup>Wai Wai Than

## Abstract

The world is competitive in every possible way, especially in the education sector, so university students tend to seek success in their academic field and try to get attention within their social circle often at any cost or effort. This leads to the presence of narcissistic personalities among the university population, stemming from underlying low self-esteem and contributing to aggression. This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of narcissism in the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among university students in Sagaing. The sample comprised 1058 undergraduate students with 519 females and 539 males from undergraduate classes. Rosenberg (1965)'s self-esteem scale, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory by Raskin and Terry (1988) and the aggression questionnaire by Buss and Warren (2000) were used as the data gathering instruments. The findings revealed that self-esteem exhibits both a direct negative effect on aggression and an indirect positive effect mediated by narcissism. Interestingly, while high self-esteem typically acts as a deterrent to aggression, its mediation by narcissism can increase aggressive tendencies. This suggests a suppressor effect, termed competitive mediation, where the positive relationship between self-esteem and aggression is reversed when narcissism serves as a suppressor variable. As this suppressor effect is enticing for the researchers, further studies should explore the moderating factors in the relationship between self-esteem, narcissism and aggression. The study's findings are expected to provide the foundational insights for the education policy makers to develop prevention programs for narcissism and aggression, promote professional development of educators, integrate curriculum components that address self-esteem, and implement counselling programs in educational settings.

**Keywords:** *self-esteem, narcissism, aggression, university students*

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## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. MEd, Educator, Modish Education Centre. Email: [khinkhinkhant281@gmail.com](mailto:khinkhinkhant281@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>MEd, Founder, Modish Education Centre.



## 1. Introduction

According to Mahatma Gandhi, “*there is a sufficiency in the world for man’s need but not for man’s greed*” (as cited in Wiersbe, 2007). Man’s greed never stops; people are constantly hungry. They are eager to satisfy more and more of their physical needs; more food, more clothes, more buildings, more technology, and more luxuries. As for psychological needs, they want more respect, more love, more success, more power, and more attention. In today’s competitive world, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to fulfil all of these needs and, as a consequence, they become more selfish.

In psychology, selfishness is viewed as a characteristic of narcissism, involving a sense of entitlement, a lack of empathy and a need for admiration, as a personality type. In their study on the associations between self-photography, narcissism, and self-esteem, Barry et al. (2017) found that selfie-taking behaviour has a significant connection with narcissism. People take selfies and tend to post them on websites such as Facebook, YouTube, Myspace, Tiktok and Twitter. Moreover, these sites create spaces for individuals to show themselves to the rest of the country and world (Twenge et al., 2008). According to the 2019 survey of May M.T.K. conducted in Myanmar, smartphone usage is very popular among university students and 89.3% use the smartphone on social media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Gtalk and Chatting. It is estimated that the popularity of smartphone usage may create narcissistic behaviour in Myanmar. With an increasing awareness of the ill effects of narcissism, it is becoming a problem that requires immediate attention among the researchers around the world. In spite of this, there is little research on narcissism in Myanmar. Even though narcissistic personality disorder is very rare, narcissism may be an inherent part of today’s Myanmar youth.

Narcissistic personality is characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness, a preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love, exhibitionism, an inability to tolerate criticism, the indifference of others, or defeat, entitlement or the expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities, interpersonal exploitativeness, and a lack of empathy (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). On the other hand, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is “a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts” (American Psychiatric Association,

2013). The narcissists can be characterized by highly inflated evaluations of the self, an elevated sense of entitlement, a need for admiration, and low empathy toward others, as they seek to maintain, protect, and promote an impossibly high self-standard (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Since the personality features of narcissism range from mild to extreme (Miller & Campbell, 2008), narcissism is often considered a personality trait, rather than a personality disorder (Sedikides et al., 2004). Thus, the present study aims to investigate the narcissistic personality rather than the narcissistic personality disorder.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the construct of 'narcissism' in general settings and among university students. In the study by Stinson et al. (2008), it was found that 6.2% of people (about 6 times the prevalence in the 2007 result) were likely to be narcissists. Similarly, the overall prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder in the general population ranged from 0.8 to 6.2 % (Cailhol et al., 2018). The findings of Twenge, the leading psychologist in the study of narcissism in the university students in the American population, showed that the rates of narcissism among the university population are on the rise (Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Twenge & Foster, 2010). In the meta-analysis study conducted by Twenge et al. (2008), it was found that on average, contemporary college students are at least somewhat more narcissistic. Therefore, as with university students in other countries, the prevalence of narcissistic personality characteristics may be increasing among Myanmar university students. If university students have a higher level of narcissism, this may later threaten the future development of the country. Because of all these possibilities, the present study has chosen university students as the focus group.

Narcissism may, in some ways, be adaptive and beneficial to both the individual and society, though it is highly debated. Though narcissism, to a limited degree, can be adaptive and beneficial, narcissism on a larger scale is very disadvantageous for both individuals and society. Among various destructive properties of narcissistic personality traits, narcissistic abuse is one of the prominent impacts of narcissism in this century. With the awareness of this dangerous issue, World Narcissistic Abuse Awareness Day is celebrated every June 1<sup>st</sup> every year since 2016. This is a global movement about narcissism.

In another context, aggression, a harmful behavior which violates social conventions and which may include deliberate intent to harm or injure another person or object (Bandura, 1973), is highly associated to narcissism. Previous studies on the relationship between narcissism and aggression found that personality traits such as those characterizing

narcissism (e.g., grandiosity, entitlement, low empathy) have been associated with aggression (Bushman & Baumeister 1998; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Likewise, Bushman et al. (2000), Mithen et al. (2023), Harper (2020), and Anello (2020) also supported the idea presented by Bushman and Baumeister (1998) that individuals who have narcissistic traits or who wish to think positively about themselves are more likely to act aggressively when their ego is being threatened. A study of Locke (2009) and a meta-analysis study of Rasmussen (2015) also indicated that narcissism is correlated with aggression. Hence, the present study aims to investigate the impact of narcissism on the aggression level of university students. However, narcissism is not the only factor that can predict aggression. Interestingly, self-esteem plays an important role in aggression. Previous scholarly works also indicated that there is a relationship between self-esteem and aggression. While Baumeister et al. (1996) and Bushman et al. (2009) stated a positive relationship, Donnellan et al. (2005) found a negative pattern. Given these controversial findings, this study also aims to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and aggression.

Moreover, self-esteem is also associated with narcissism. This relationship is best explained by the object- relation approach of Kernberg (1975); the inability to differentiate between the ideal self, the real self and the ideal object lead to narcissism. Moreover, Kohut (1972) characterized narcissism as an exaggerated form of self-esteem. Individuals seek to have a very strong shield in regard to their sense of self. It is no secret that they view themselves very positively (Campbell & Sedikides, 2002). There is a consistent finding of a modest to moderate connection between these two constructs in the nomological network analysis conducted by Hyatt et al. (2017). Moreover, according to Pilch and Hyla (2017), positive correlations between self-esteem and narcissism were found in both non-clinical and clinical samples. Thus, this study aims to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and narcissism.

Self-esteem is associated with both narcissism and aggression. Moreover, narcissism is also related to aggression. This is an interesting and somewhat surprising connection that self-esteem directly affects narcissism and, in turn, narcissism directly affects aggression whereas self-esteem also directly affects aggression. These intriguing findings have contributed to further investigation in this study on whether there is an indirect effect of self-esteem on aggression through narcissism; in other words, whether narcissism can explain the relationship between self-esteem and aggression. These relationships are clearly observed in

the threatened egotism theory of Kohut (1972), which implies that individuals who depend on others to maintain their self-esteem will be more likely to respond with shame or narcissistic rage (narcissistic aggression) if they receive an injury themselves (i.e. a narcissistic injury). Kernberg (1975)'s concept of narcissism also explained how narcissists cannot separate the real self from the ideal self, which tends to breed aggression. According to previous findings, high self-esteem is associated with higher narcissism and this in turn is associated with higher aggression (Anwar et al., 2016; Locke, 2008). However, a different pattern was found by Barnett and Powell (2005) wherein narcissism is positively associated with aggression and negatively associated with self-esteem, while low self-esteem is linked to specific forms of aggression, including physical and verbal aggression. This finding aligns with the psychodynamic Mask Model, which posits that narcissistic individuals adopt an unrealistic sense of self to conceal their underlying low self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013). Based on these contradictory findings, the main aim of this study is to explore the mediating role of narcissism in the relationship between self-esteem and aggression of university students in Sagaing. Accordingly, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

**Hypothesis 1:** Self-esteem directly predicts aggression (Bushman et al., 2009; Donnellan et al., 2005).

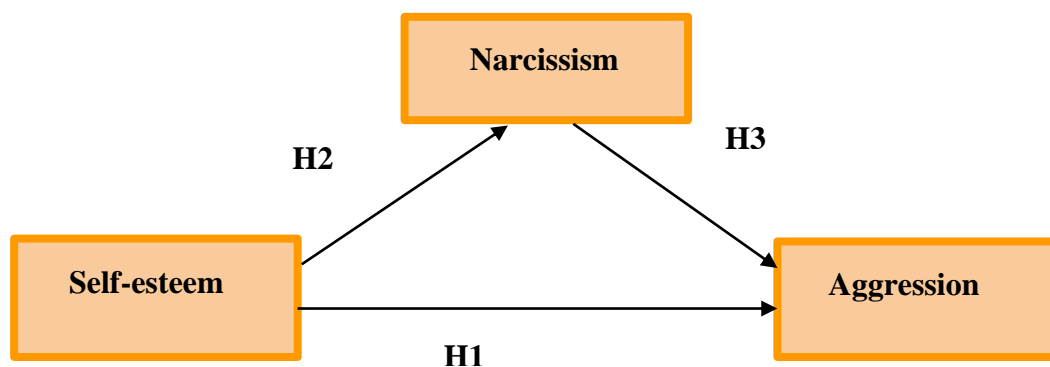
**Hypothesis 2:** Self-esteem directly predicts narcissism (Pilch & Hyla, 2017).

**Hypothesis 3:** Narcissism directly predicts aggression (Locke, 2009; Rasmussen, 2015).

The proposed conceptual model of the mediating role of narcissism in the relationship between self-esteem and aggression is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The proposed conceptual model of mediation analysis*





## 2. Literature review

Narcissism poses a significant threat to the academic success and well-being of university students since it stems from inflated self-esteem. A thorough understanding of narcissism has become a necessity to fortify the students against aggression, the detrimental consequences of narcissism. This literature review endeavors to scrutinize existing research and scholarly works on self-esteem, narcissism, and aggression. This literature review also aims to analyze the underlying cause of narcissism and the destructive effect which it has

### *2.1 Narcissism*

Since narcissism is an important part of this study, the following section will focus on defining narcissism from different perspectives before the Kernberg's Theory of Narcissism. This starts with Freud, accompanied by the definitions of narcissism based on the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM III, DSM IV and DSM V by American Psychiatric Association), and proceeds to newer perspectives: two modes of expression (overt and covert), two phenotypes (grandiosity and vulnerability) and two natures (normal and pathological). Despite the various aspects of narcissism, this study aims to apply the criteria of DSM III as the working definition of narcissism because the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) was based on these criteria.

Freud's (1914) theory of narcissism proposed two types: primary narcissism and secondary narcissism. He defined primary narcissism as "the type of narcissism that refers to the libido that is invested in the ego of an individual prior to differentiating the ego from external objects." Here, the libido refers to the basic instinct to survive and cooperate with others. Freud considered primary narcissism as the normal type of narcissism which can be found in every individual because of their instinct desire to preserve 'self'. In contrast to primary narcissism, he defined secondary narcissism as "reinvestment of the libido into the self after it was invested in others". He considered secondary narcissism as pathological. It has a detrimental effect since the libido is channeled to others rather than the self.

After narcissism had been proposed as maladaptive by Freud, it continued to be regarded as pathological: indeed, in 1980, the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) by the American Psychiatric Association defined NPD by the following clinical criteria: a grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness; a preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; exhibitionism; an inability to tolerate criticism, the indifference of others or defeat;

entitlement or the expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities; interpersonal exploitativeness, relationships that alternate between extremes of over idealization and devaluation; and lack of empathy.

According to DSM-IV, narcissism is characterized by “an exaggerated sense of self-importance and uniqueness, an unreasonable sense of entitlement, a craving for admiration, exploitative tendencies toward others, deficient empathy, and arrogance” (APA, 2000). When compared to DSM- III, the other criteria are identical but criteria number two and three are omitted in DSM-IV. According to DSM-V, NPD is “a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy and behavior), a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts (APA, 2013)”. In comparison with DSM- III, only criteria number one, three and seven are involved and others are omitted. Moreover, according to Pincus and Lukowitsky (2010), narcissism is commonly described as having two natures (normal and pathological), two phenotypes (grandiosity and vulnerability), and two modes of expression (overt and covert). Normal narcissism (adaptive) is analogous to Freud’s primary narcissism and pathological narcissism with secondary narcissism (maladaptive). Narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability are interrelated (Cain et al., 2008). The grandiosity aspect includes the characteristics of showing off, being egoistic assertive, authority, low emotional distress, and high self-esteem and overconfidence, exhibitionism, publicity, and exploitativeness (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010; Wink, 1991). In contrast, these studies stated that the vulnerability aspect contains characteristics of being argumentative, bitter, self-protective, high emotional distress and low self-esteem and self-interest, defensiveness, uncertainty, and resentment. Originally used by Cooper (1981), overt narcissism tends to be extroverted whereas covert, more introverted.

***Kernberg’s (1975) Theory of Narcissism.*** Otto Kernberg (1975) wrote extensively on narcissistic disorders, believing that they were a subtype of borderline personality disorders. In his definition of narcissism, he observes that narcissists have an unusual degree of self-reference in their interactions with other people, a superficial emotional life, little empathy, envious feeling of others. Many elements of this definition were later used to help create the diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder in the DSM-III.

Following Freud’s path, his view on narcissism was based on the id, ego, and superego. He believed that narcissism was a dysfunctional development of the self and pathological narcissism was a result of unintegrated grandiose or devalued self and object

representations. He suggested that if one's ego could not differentiate between the actual and ideal self or object, it is denoted as the grandiose self of narcissists where only their good and positive senses are preserved. The grandiose self is constructed from leftover positive aspects of the child from early experiences (the real self), the imaginary version of the self - developed to compensate for frustration and protect against the rage-filled bad (the ideal self), and the imaginary version of accepting and loving parents (the ideal object) (Kernberg, 1970). A key element in his thinking was the idea that unacceptable or negative aspects of the self are split off from the main self but nonetheless influence the functioning of the self. Thus, in his view, the narcissistic self is pathological.

Another key part of his view of narcissism is that, while self-love and self-esteem appear to be a normal aspect of the individual, narcissism is not instinctually present in everyone. He stated that for healthy self-esteem development, individuals need positive reinforcement and opportunities for achievement from their environment. They also require a balanced internal moral compass that is not overly critical and realistic, motivating personal aspirations. Support and nurture of caregivers further contribute to a stable and positive sense of self-worth. He employed a continuum (or spectrum) of narcissism to explain the scope of narcissism. This extends from pathological narcissism (intense conflicts around both aggression and love), through malignant and destructive narcissism, to the narcissism present in psychopathic personality disorder (Kernberg, 1975).

Despite the fact that later research was influenced by the notion that narcissism was a continuous dimension, which on the extreme end was pathological, Kernberg himself rejected this view, preferring to see pathological narcissism as intrinsically different from normal adult narcissism and normal infantile narcissism. He defined normal adult narcissism as the libidinal investment of the self. Normal narcissism involves an integration of good and bad self-images into a realistic self-concept in contrast to the highly unrealistic perfect self-image of pathological narcissists.

In 1976, he adopted an object-relation method as the cause of narcissism, which means that the influence of the parent-child relationship is crucial in the development of narcissism. When children are brought up in families where those caring for them are cold and lacking compassion, they see themselves as unlovable and deprived during their early stage of development with the result that they become aggressive. The child, faced with severe frustration, disappointment, deprivation or loss feels overwhelming rage and hate

which in turn evokes fear and anxiety that the anger will cause the destruction of the loved persons or loving relationship. The child projects his anger onto the parents while defensively investing in some aspect of the self that his parents' value. Then fearing that the anger will lead to the destruction of the parents, the child projects his aggression from the internal world onto the external world, using two main defenses, splitting and projection, to protect the self from the bad world. Splitting can be seen as a reaction to negative events and perceptions.

### ***2.2 Self-esteem***

Rosenberg (1965) refers self-esteem to an individual overall positive or negative evaluation to the self. In his view, all "self" studies have "an evaluative dimension" that produces "self-estimation". He used the term self-estimation to indicate how the individual actually rates himself with regard to a particular characteristic. Every individual has many 'self-estimates' of differing importance.

According to Rosenberg, high self-esteem does not necessarily reflect feelings of high competence or efficacy. The individual with high self-esteem simply respects himself and sees himself a worthy personality in his community. In contrast, low self-esteem implies self-rejection, low self-satisfaction and self-contempt. The individual lacks respect for "the self". Rosenberg considers low self-esteem to be mainly motivated by fear of failure and fear of interpersonal criticism, fears that are often self-fulfilling.

### ***2.3 Aggression***

From the behaviorist view, Buss (1961) simply characterized aggression as the infliction of harm on others or noxious stimuli delivered to another organism. In his study, a general working definition was that aggression is goal-oriented behaviour directed at other organisms with the aim of injuring them.

***Five aspects of aggression.*** Buss and Perry (1992) gave four factors: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility. Physical aggression refers to the act of lashing out bodily with the intention of harming others, who are motivated to avoid the harm. Verbal aggression refers to insults or warning of such action. Verbal aggression includes shouting, arguing, cursing and sarcasm (Ahsan, 2015). Anger is an affective sub-type of trait aggression that is central to aggressive behavior, often serving as the motivational precursor to it. Hostility is a cognitive sub-type of trait aggression and refers to an antagonistic mindset in which the world is perceived to be an unjust place. Buss and Warren (2000) added indirect aggression to the existing four factors, indirect aggression involves social manipulation by

the perpetrator, where the aggressive act is delivered more indirectly, such that there is no direct contact in the social interaction between the two parties. Indirect aggression usually occurs in those individuals who are socially inhibited (Richardson & Green, 2003).

***The effect of self-esteem and narcissism on aggression.*** The potential link between self-esteem and aggression has been controversial. Currently, there appear to be two competing hypotheses, each suggesting that people at different levels of the self-esteem continuum are vulnerable to aggression. It was indicated that high self-esteem is associated with aggression (Baumeister et al., 1996; Bushman et al., 2009). In contrast, several studies appeared to show evidence that low self-esteem is associated with aggression (Donnellan et al., 2005). In support, as described by Anwar et al. (2016), Rosenberg (1965) observed that low self-esteem weakens the connectivity of people with their society.

The relationship between narcissism and aggression was explained by Freud. He assumed that self-preoccupied people are aggressive towards others. Kohut (1972) also felt that individuals with narcissistic characteristics are likely to produce the same fight or flight reaction when presented with a narcissistic injury, a traumatic experience when narcissists have been criticized, rejected or ignored. If individuals have the flight reaction, they are likely to react with shame. However, if they have the fight response, they will react with narcissistic rage. This is supported by the results of the studies by Locke (2009) and Rasmussen (2015) showing that narcissism is positively related to aggression.

Narcissistic individuals have unstable and unrealistic self-esteem. They have self-esteem that appears confident but hides deep insecurities and a fragile sense of self-worth (Kuchynka & Bosson, 2018). They also stated that in the psychodynamic mask model of narcissism, narcissistic individuals tend to wear metaphorical “masks” to hide their true feelings and thoughts. These masks protect their self-esteem by helping them cope with internal conflicts. Underneath these masks are deeper, often unconscious rather than conscious emotions that influence their behaviour and interactions. In the study of Barnett and Powell (2005), it was found that narcissistic people tend to have low self-esteem. As described in Kernberg (1975)'s theory of narcissism, a narcissist tends to have unstable self-esteem. He suggested that this is related to a lack of differentiation among an individual's self-representations (real-self) and ideal self-representations, and ideal object representations. Empirical support for this relationship can be found in the study of Pilch and Hyla (2017), which indicates positive correlations between self-esteem and narcissism in both non-clinical

and clinical samples. While some researchers indicated that high self-esteem is associated with a range of mental health indicators, others proved that high self-esteem is associated with narcissism which can cause more interpersonal difficulties, as well as anger and aggression (Hook, 2007). Similarly, Anwar et al. (2016) and Locke (2008) found that high self-esteem is associated with higher narcissism and this in turn is associated with higher aggression. These findings are in line with Kernberg's concept of narcissism, namely that narcissists' grandiose self, inability to separate the real self from the ideal self, can spark aggression. However, this contradicts the finding of Barnett and Powell who assert that narcissism is associated with low self-esteem. This may reflect the nature of self-esteem in narcissistic individuals as previously described.

The relationship between these three variables is revealed in threatened egotism theory, in which high self-esteem can become a liability rather than a benefit. This theory suggests that aggression can be the result of such individuals in cases where the view of 'self' is challenged. This is particularly liable to happen if the view of 'self' is too positive, which happens with narcissistic individuals. Baumeister et al. (1996) examined the relationship between aggressive behavior and self-esteem and found that the most likely result of a threat to the ego of an individual with very high self-esteem was aggression, where the individual rejects 'the esteem-threatening evaluations' of others: there was no such relationship in cases of low self-esteem.

More specifically, the 'theory of threatened egotism' proposes that the source of the feedback becomes the focus of the anger when such feedback threatens the ego. Indeed, it has been confirmed in a number of studies that narcissistic individuals receiving negative feedback tend to react angrily towards others: in contrast, those at the other end of the narcissistic scale tend to become depressed or show similar negative reactions towards the self (Stucke, 2003). As for those individuals with high but unstable self-esteem, it was noted by Kernis et al. (1993) that, when the ego is threatened, the threat is externalized and attacked, or efforts are made to devalue its legitimacy. Such individuals are also prompted to greater anger depending on how justified the threat was, higher levels of anger being prompted by threats perceived to be unjustified (Kernis et al., 1989). This theory has been proved by the results of research, which show that elevated self-esteem correlates with increased narcissism, which subsequently links to heightened levels of aggression (Anwar et al., 2016; Locke 2008).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

In order to execute the research objectives quantitatively, this study focuses mainly on quantitative research approaches by means of survey design. This survey study was conducted by correlational design.

#### 3.2 Population and sample

The target population for this study was undergraduate students in Sagaing Region, Myanmar. In order to provide a fair and unbiased way to select samples, this study utilized a simple random sampling method. With a total of 1049 university students from three universities in Sagaing in the Academic Year 2019-2020, the selection process provided every individual with an equal opportunity of being selected, avoiding any potential biases and ultimately enhancing external validity. By employing a simple random sampling technique, the study aimed to enhance the generalizability of the findings to the broader Sagaing Region in Myanmar. The obtained sample includes 519 male and 540 female undergraduate students, as shown in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of students by gender*

University	Male	Female	Total
Sagaing University	207	205	412
Cooperative University	143	173	315
Sagaing University of Education	169	162	331
<b>Total</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>1049</b>

#### 3.3 Instrumentation

To study self-esteem, narcissism and aggression of university students from universities in Sagaing Township, three instruments were used. The first one, Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale was used to measure the self-esteem of university students. It was developed in 1965 and is a unidimensional scale. The total number of items used in this study was 10 and all are 4-point Likert types (1= Strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3= Disagree, 4= Strongly disagree). Among the 10 items, 5 items (2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) were negatively stated and they were scored reversely.

The second instrument, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), developed by Raskin and Terry (1988), was used to measure the narcissistic personality. There are seven subscales: 8 items for authority, 6 items for self-sufficiency, 5 items for superiority, 7 items for exhibitionism, 5 items for exploitativeness, 3 items for vanity, and 6 items for entitlement. The total number of items used in this study was 40 examined by forced choice dichotomous type. High scores on the scale are an indication of high narcissistic personality and low scores are an indication of low narcissistic personality.

The third instrument, the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) developed by Buss and Warren (2000), was used to measure the aggression of university students in Sagaing Township. There are five subscales: 7 items for physical aggression, 5 items for verbal aggression, 7 items for anger, 8 items for hostility and 6 items for indirect aggression. The total number of items used in this study is 34 and all are 5-point Likert type (1= Not at all like me, 2= A little like me, 3= Somewhat like me, 4= Very much like me, and 5= Completely like me). Among the 34 items, item number 19 was negatively stated and it was scored reversely.

After translating these items from English into a Myanmar version, a review was conducted for face and content validity by experts in the field of Educational Psychology from Sagaing University Education (SUOE). Changes were made as necessary according to their suggestions. Then pilot testing was conducted with 91 university students in Sagaing University of Education (SUOE) in order to determine the reliability of the instruments. Cronbach's alpha values 0.816 for RSES (Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale), 0.706 for NPI and 0.890 for AQ showed the high internal consistency of all the instruments. Therefore, it was concluded that all the instruments in this study are highly reliable and valid.

### ***3.4 Statistical analysis***

In this study, quantitative research methodologies were used. In order to answer the research questions, quantitative data analysis techniques were utilized. The quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and correlation analysis with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 21.0 (SPSS 21.0) and mediation analysis was conducted with the help of the Analysis of a Moment Structures version 23.0 (Amos 23.0).

By descriptive analysis, the mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum scores for students' self-esteem, narcissism and aggression were examined. Next, correlation



analysis was done to discover if there was a relationship between variables and to investigate how strong this relationship might be.

For the proposed mediation model, a mediation analysis was done to investigate the mediating role of narcissism in the relationship between self-esteem and aggression.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

This study explored self-esteem, narcissism and aggression, especially the relationship patterns between these three variables. Descriptive statistics were used to study these variables, and a mediation analysis is used to investigate the inter-correlation among these three variables.

### 4.1 Inter-correlations between self-esteem, narcissism and aggression

**Table 2**

*Means, standard deviations and inter-correlations for aggression and predictor variables*

Variables	Mean	SD	Self-esteem	Narcissism
Aggression	78.93	19.525	-.087**	.219**
<b>Predictor Variables</b>				
Self-esteem	26.26	3.161	1	0.283**
Narcissism	14.43	5.424	-	1

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$

As shown in table 2, the mean and standard deviation of self-esteem were 26.26 and 3.161, those of narcissism were 14.43 and 5.424, and those of aggression were 78.93 and 19.525. The mean score for self-esteem of university students was 26.26. So, it can be concluded that the self-esteem of university students in Sagaing Township was low. The mean score for narcissism of university students was 14.43. Thus, it can be concluded that the narcissism of university students in Sagaing Township was within normal levels. The mean score for aggression of university students was 78.93. So, it can be concluded that the aggression of university students in Sagaing Township was low.

According to the result, the correlation between self-esteem and narcissism was ( $r = .283, p < .01$ ). This supported the interpretation that university students with high self-esteem tend not to show low levels of narcissism. Moreover, it was found that the correlation of aggression and self-esteem ( $r = -.087, p < .01$ ), and that of aggression and narcissism ( $r = .219, p < .01$ ) would be considered small to medium as compared to the typical effect size,

according to Cohen (1988). This indicates that university students with low levels of self-esteem tend to exhibit more aggression. Moreover, highly narcissistic university students are likely to be more aggressive. Therefore, it can be seen that all these variables were significantly correlated with aggression.

#### ***4.2 The mediating role of narcissism in the relationship between self-esteem and aggression***

A simple mediation path analysis was used to explain the underlying mechanisms of the relationship between **self-esteem** (DV) and **aggression** (IV) through **narcissism** (Mediator).

##### ***Hypotheses for mediation analysis***

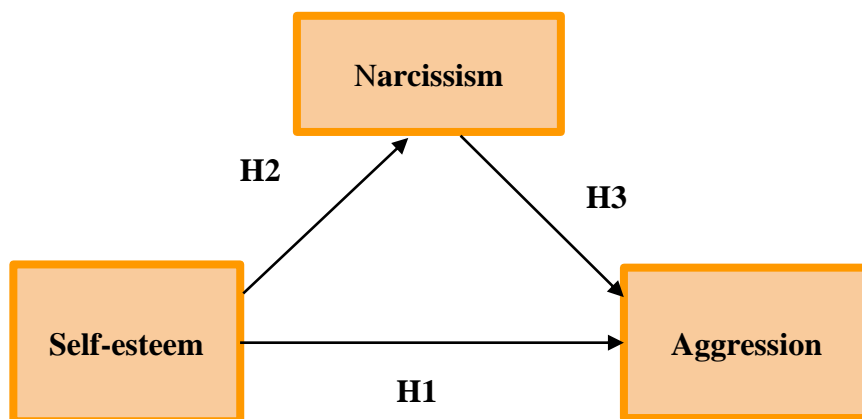
Hypothesis 1: Self-esteem directly predicts aggression (Bushman et al., 2009; Donnellan et al., 2005).

Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem directly predicts narcissism (Pilch & Hyla, 2017).

Hypothesis 3: Narcissism directly predicts aggression (Locke, 2009; Rasmussen, 2015).

**Figure 2**

*Proposed model for predicting aggression from self-esteem and narcissism*



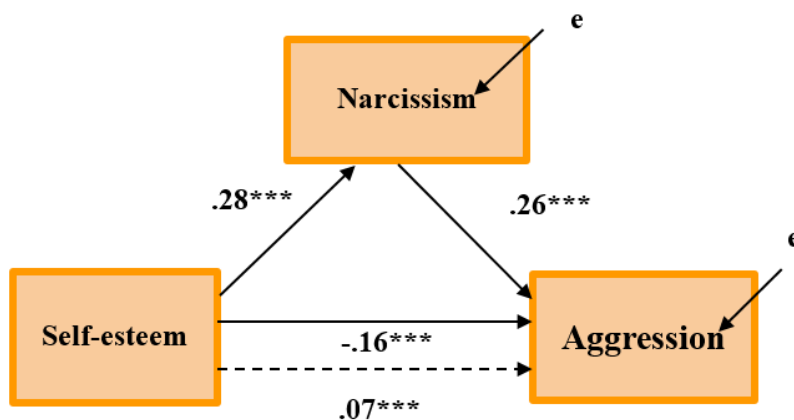
The direct and indirect effects between variables are presented in table 3.

**Table 3***Summary of causal effects for the mediation model (self-esteem)*

Outcomes	Determinant	Causal Effects		
		Direct	Indirect	Total
Narcissism ( $R^2=.08$ )	Self-esteem	.28***	–	.28***
	Narcissism	–	.07***	–
Aggression ( $R^2=.07$ )	Self-esteem	-.16***	.07***	-.09***
	Narcissism	.26***	–	.26***

*Note.* \*\*\* denotes significant paths t at  $p < .001$ .

In the initial analysis, Model 1 revealed a significant regression with an R-squared value of 0.8, indicating that the model accounted for approximately 8% of the variance in narcissism. Despite the relatively low percentage, it was observed that self-esteem significantly predicted narcissism, suggesting that higher self-esteem was associated with greater narcissism. Subsequently, Model 2 demonstrated another significant regression with an R-squared value of 0.7, signifying that the model explained 7% of the variance in aggression. The primary pathway indicated that narcissism positively predicted aggression, suggesting higher narcissism leads to higher aggression. Conversely, self-esteem negatively predicted aggression, implying that higher self-esteem was associated with lower aggression. The indirect effect of self-esteem on aggression demonstrated inconsistent partial mediation, as higher self-esteem led to increased narcissism, which, in turn, was associated with heightened aggression. This inconsistency contradicted the direct effect observed in the aggression pathway, resulting in the mediator acting as a suppressor.

**Figure 3***The mediation model for predicting aggression from self-esteem and narcissism*

This result also indicated that self-esteem has a negative influence on aggression, however this effect could be suppressed by narcissism because self-esteem leads to greater narcissism, and this variable has a positive effect on aggression. An inconsistent partial mediation model was found. Therefore, it is concluded that although self-esteem only can prevent aggression, it, mediated by narcissism, can contribute to aggression.

## 5. Conclusion

This research studied self-esteem, narcissism and aggression, especially the mediating effect of narcissism on the relationship between self-esteem and aggression of university students in Sagaing by using mediation analysis. According to the result of the descriptive analysis, the majority of university students in Sagaing revealed low self-esteem, a normal level of narcissism, and a low level of aggression. The main purpose of this study is to examine the mediating effect of narcissism on the relationship between self-esteem and aggression. An inconsistent partial mediation model was found. Self-esteem had a significant direct effect on aggression, and also a significant indirect effect on aggression through a mediator (suppressor), narcissism.

Assessment of **H1** showed that the higher the level of self-esteem, the lower the level of aggression. This may be by virtue of the nature of self-esteem that the individuals who really respect themselves, are satisfied with their own qualities and possess an optimistic view of themselves are less likely to engage in argumentative manners, destroy others with the aim of protecting themselves and more likely to control their anger and anger-related behaviors. Rosenberg (1965) also stated that low self-esteem weakens the connectivity of people with their society. According to the social-bonding theory, low self-esteem decreases conformity with societal norms which leads to delinquency (Anwar et al., 2016). This is congruent with the results of previous studies (Baumeister et al., 2003; Donnellan et al., 2005; Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

Assessment of **H2** showed that high self-esteem had a positive effect on narcissism. Therefore, it can be concluded that higher self-esteem leads to higher narcissism. This may be because of the fact that individuals with high self-esteem see themselves as possessing so many qualities and this may direct them to the desire to be a leader, evoking a drive to acquire power and authority, one of the narcissistic features. Moreover, this characteristic of high self-esteem was related to other narcissistic features such as self-sufficiency (they need

not learn anymore), superiority (see themselves as extraordinary and special ones) and like their appearance (vanity). Additionally, narcissism is an exaggerated form of self-esteem (Kohut, 1972). So, individuals with high self-esteem exhibit a higher level of narcissism. This finding is consistent with the results of studies such as those of Campbell et al. (2002), Raskin and Terry (1988), and Raskin et al. (1991).

Assessment of **H3** showed that a high level of narcissism contributes to a high level of aggression. The examination of the subscales of each questionnaire indicates that exploitativeness is related to indirect aggression, exhibitionism to hostility and anger, and superiority to physical aggression and indirect aggression. One of the characteristics of narcissistic people is that they tend to exploit others for their own benefit. This can lead to spreading gossip about people they don't like (indirect aggression) and showing more physical aggression. In line with the nature of exhibitionism, highly narcissistic people get upset when other people don't notice how they look when they go out in public: they tend to demand others' attention and they are hypersensitive to others' evaluations. When these people cannot get the desired attention and are negatively evaluated, they protect themselves against feelings of inferiority and shame by externalizing blame for their failures, which leads to feelings of hostility (they do not trust others) and anger (they get very angry for no apparent reason). In addition, superiority also leads to physical aggression (they resort to violence to protect their rights) and indirect aggression (giving the silent treatment to others). Baumeister et al. (1996) established that people who have inflated, or unjustified favorable views of self are more likely to be aggressive, and intolerant. All in all, a higher level of narcissism contributes to the higher level of aggression. This is congruent with the findings of Anwar et al. (2016), Locke (2009), Ostrowsky (2010), Rasmussen (2015), and Rhodewalt and Morf (1995).

Since H1, H2 and H3 are accepted, there is the partial mediation effect of narcissism on the relationship between self-esteem and aggression. It was found that self-esteem has a direct negative effect on aggression and also an indirect positive effect on aggression through the mediation effect of narcissism. Here, narcissism is denoted as a suppressor since the direct negative effect of self-esteem on aggression has changed to a positive effect when mediated by narcissism. This finding is consistent with the studies conducted by Anwar et al. (2016) and Locke (2008).

In this study, a small inconsistent partial mediation was found. Analysing the present result contributes to an interesting idea about how narcissism appears from high self-esteem. The nature of self-esteem tested in this study comes from conscious thinking. However, there is another aspect of human thought that is more concerned with previous experience and it is unconscious. According to Epstein's cognitive experiential self-theory, the former is called explicit self-esteem and the latter implicit self-esteem, while both contain schemas about the self. Even though the role of real self and ideal self in creating narcissism has been described in the literature section, this study could not explore the role of implicit self-esteem. Hence, this research fails to adequately explain the connection between self-esteem and narcissism. This is the limitation of mediation analysis called omitted variable bias where the estimated effects of the mediator or outcome variable are confounded by unmeasured variables. The presence of unmeasured confounders affecting both the mediator and outcome variables can bias estimates of the indirect effect. Future researchers should explore the relationship between self-esteem and narcissism by controlling confounding variables such as implicit self-esteem and other related variables, including demographic variables, researchers can address this limitation through statistical adjustment or matching techniques. Moreover, this study was based on quantitative research design. If a mixed method approach had been used, other factors that influence the relationship between self-esteem and narcissism would have been explored via interviews or open-ended surveys.

Despite the limitations, the result of this study contributes new findings to this academic field and also provides valuable insights that can inform the development and implementation of aggression and narcissism prevention programs, promote the professional development of educators, integrate curriculum components that address self-esteem, and implement counselling programs in educational settings, thereby fostering inclusive learning environment for students and mitigating the risk of narcissism.

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# Theories and approaches of social psychology

<sup>1</sup>Aida Mehrad, <sup>2</sup>Madison Sternberg, <sup>2</sup>Emujin Buyandalai, <sup>2</sup>Angelina Pius, <sup>2</sup>Elliana Stanich, <sup>2</sup>Hibatullah Shaalan, <sup>2</sup>Emma Olson, <sup>2</sup>Mackenzie Triscik, <sup>2</sup>Amanda Bultema, <sup>2</sup>Clare Fritsch, <sup>2</sup>Sofia Primo, Logan Leve, <sup>2</sup>Alyssa Bullock, <sup>2</sup>Ellie Taylor, <sup>2</sup>Alexa Rico & <sup>2</sup>Emily Langston

## Abstract

Social psychology is a field that studies how social thinking, behavior, and influence shape daily lives. This paper examines various social psychology theories, including social cognition, individual identity, and social influences. The main goal is to gain insight into the human behavior and interactions by exploring social, psychological, and sociological theories. The study used a systematic review based on previous research over three months and analyzed 80 research papers, ultimately using 28 papers that mostly covered the aim of this study. The findings highlighted the importance of racial diversity in shaping contemporary race relations and emphasized the need for cohesive yet diverse communities. The analyses revealed that individuals' tendencies to self-serve inflate their traits' moral value, influencing others' self-perceptions and judgments. Innovative approaches such as agent-based modeling offered new perspectives on social dynamics, while identity emerged as a fluid construct shaped by socio-historical contexts. The ecological perspective provided valuable insights into the adaptive relationship between individuals and their environments. This review illuminates the crucial role of social psychology in understanding the complex interplay of individual behaviors, societal influences, and evolving identities. Throughout the paper, the discussion concerns the connection between theories and research and the application of findings to real-life situations. Hence, social psychology provides valuable insights into individual behavior and the social environment.

**Keywords:** *behavior, psychology, social psychology, theory*

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## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. Professor, Researcher, Social Psychologist, Industrial and Organizational Psychologist, Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA-Butler), Barcelona Spain 08010.

<sup>2</sup>Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA-Butler), Barcelona Spain 08010

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## 1. Introduction

Knowing individual behavior and the type of communication in different societies can be exciting and challenging for all those who would like to study and discover better human behavior, which in social psychology is assumed as one of the primary and bare branches of psychology, has been found and studied by numerous psychologists and scholars. Similarities in behavior and attitudes among individuals in different societies were the main reason social psychology focused more on finding a better introduction, making clear receiving outside behavior, and knowing other people better with accurate attitudes without judgment and prejudice. Social psychology is a dynamic of human behavior in different social settings rooted in social cognition. It is an endeavor to comprehend and describe how individuals' beliefs, feelings, and manners are impacted by the actual, suspected, or implied existence of other human beings.

Unlike psychological disciplines, social situations' impact is focused on individual thoughts and behavior. Social psychologists are concerned about everyone's different responses in social situations. For instance, World War II sparked the concept of behavior change and an interest in social influence. Moreover, Kurt Lewin was one of the most significant influences on social psychology because he stimulated consistency and attribution theories. This had a substantial impact on social psychology at the time. Social psychology has evolved, and new concepts like cognition, evolutionary social psychology, and social neuroscience have developed (Hewstone et al., 2021).

In the intricate tapestry of human behavior, social psychology acts as a guiding thread, weaving through the complex connections between individual actions and the ever-present influence of the social environment. Stemming from the visionary work of psychologist Gordon Allport, this scientific discipline employs rigorous methods to unravel the profound ways in which thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are shaped by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. Within the expansive realm of social psychology, a diverse array of topics takes center stage. From the dynamics of group behavior to the subtle nuances of nonverbal communication, the field delves into leadership, conformity, aggression, and prejudice, exploring the multifaceted facets of human interaction. It's not merely an examination of social influences; it delves into the core of social perception and interaction, understanding these elements' profound impact on individual choices, attitudes, and perceptions.

However, social psychology stands distinct from its neighboring disciplines. Unlike folk wisdom, which relies on anecdotal observations, social psychology uses empirical study and scientific methods. It differs from personality psychology, which focuses on individual traits by centering its gaze on situations and the impact of the social environment on attitudes and behaviors. While sociology examines broad-based social behavior and influences, social psychology focuses on situational variables that shape how individuals interact with society. The importance of social psychology is underscored by its profound impact on individual well-being and societal health. As it scrutinizes issues ranging from substance use and crime to prejudice and aggression, social psychologists contribute valuable insights that extend beyond academia. Such research has influenced public health programs, guiding strategies to encourage healthy behaviors and deter potentially harmful ones. In essence, social psychology is not just an academic pursuit but a dynamic force that illuminates the pathways through which society shapes individual lives (Cherry, 2022).

Facing different reactions and social behaviors that individuals show each other can sometimes lead to misunderstanding and can cause many conflicts and interior or exterior problems. Hence, this study mainly focused on human behavior by analyzing the previous theories and models that are helpful in behavioral communication and sociality. It emphasized on individual behavior and attitudes toward each other, once they are leaving multicultural environment by driving theories and models of social psychology.

## **2. Methodology**

This paper used literature review as the methodology. The research gathered references that focused intensely on theories and models of social psychology to provide accurate evidence and data for scholars and future psychologists/ sociologists. The paper was designed based on a three-month systematic review (January 2024 - March 2024). The researchers selected 80 research papers and other articles from Google Scholar, ResearchGate, PsycINFO, and Academia. The keywords for the selection of the article include social psychology, theories of social psychology, and social analysis. Only papers that identify and discuss the different theories of social psychology or its related theories and concepts were selected. After the thorough evaluation, selection and elimination, 28 papers mainly related to the topic were chosen. Table 1 shows the list of articles considered for this study.

**Table 1**  
*Articles used in the study*

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Aim of the study</b>
Festinger	1954	Focused on theories of social psychology- comparison process
Axelrod	1973	Focused on schema theory with considering perception and cognition
Sternberg	1986	Focused on triangular theory in the concept of social psychology
Hogg et al.	1995	Focused on social identity by considering social psychology
Peters & Appel	1996	Focused on social analysis and positioning theory
Burger	1999	Focused on self-verification theory by considering social psychology
Frey & Jegen	2000	Focused on motivation theory by considering social psychology.
Robak	2001	Focused on self-perception theory in the concept of social psychology
Raisz	2005	Focused on socioemotional selectivity theory in the concept of social psychology.
Harré et al.	2009	Positioning theory with considering social psychology
Fryling et al.	2011	Focused on observational learning theory (social learning)
Jost & Van der Toorn	2012	Focused on system justification theory by considering social psychology
Kitchen et al.	2014	Focused on elaboration likelihood model with considering on social psychology
Subramaniam	2014	Focused on social constructionism by considering social psychology.
Carpenter & Greene	2015	Focused on social penetration theory by considering social psychology
Solomon	2017	Focused on terror management theory by considering social psychology
Koole et al.	2018	Focused on self-determination theory by considering social psychology
Jost	2020	Focused on system justification theory by considering social psychology
Hewstone & Stroebe	2021	Focused on social psychology and analyzing human behavior
Schuler et al.	2021	Focused on symbolic interactionism by considering social psychology
Cherry	2022	Focused on social psychology and human behavior analysis
LaMorte	2022	Focused on social cognitive theory by considering social psychology
Mcleod	2023	Focused on social impact theory and attribution by considering social psychology
Mehrad et al.	2023	Focused on relating theories in the concept of social psychology
Davlembayeva & Papagiannidis	2024	Focused on social influence theories by considering social psychology
Mehrad et al.	2024	Focused on various layers in social psychology and related theories
Lawler & Thye	n. d	Focused on social exchange theory by considering social psychology



### **3. Findings and Discussion**

Some various models and theories of social psychology are mainly discussed in different aspects. Therefore, this study specifically focused on these theories and models.

#### ***3.1 Social Identity Theory***

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a theory in social psychology that focuses on intergroup relations, group processes, and the social self. Early work by Henri Tajfel, including social factors and perception and cognitive and social beliefs on racism, prejudice, and discrimination, brought this theory to life. It was developed entirely by John Turner and others in the 1970s at the University of Bristol. This theory experienced advances and gained popularity throughout the 1980s, ultimately leading to further development of the theory today. The overarching idea of SIT is that individuals' self-concept is formed by their defining characteristics and the group in which they have membership. The basic idea is that a social category (nationality, political affiliation, sports team) into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, defines who one is. Each membership defines what that individual should think, feel, and how they should behave. According to the theory, social identities evaluate the characteristics of one group compared to another, which ultimately motivates the members to adopt behavior that aligns with others in their group. SIT combines the processes of categorization and self-enhancement with subjective belief structures, which are "people's beliefs about the nature of relations between their group and relevant out-groups" (Hogg et al., 1995). How individuals view their group's status and potential social mobility compared to other groups influences their motivation to pursue a more positive social identity. The social concept is attached to personal values, and because of this, groups try to achieve a positive social identity. People also tend to judge others based on the characteristics of people in the group that they belong to.

#### ***3.2 Social Cognitive Theory***

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the person, environment, and behavior, highlighting social influence and external and internal reinforcement. SCT acknowledges the role of past experiences in shaping behavior and places importance on the enduring nature of behaviors, a crucial aspect overlooked in other health promotion theories. The fundamental constructs of the SCT include reciprocal

determinism, emphasizing the continuous interaction among the person, environment, and behavior. Behavioral capability focuses on an individual's proficiency in performing actions through essential knowledge and skills influenced by the outcomes of their actions. Observational learning asserts that individuals can acquire knowledge by observing others, often exemplified through modeling. Whether internal or external, reinforcements play a pivotal role in shaping behavior, involving positive or negative responses and being self-initiated or stemming from the environment. Expectations involve the anticipated consequences of one's actions, shaped by past experiences and distinct from subjective value judgments, more commonly known as expectancies. Self-efficacy is uniquely integrated into SCT evolution and pertains to an individual's confidence in their ability to execute a behavior influenced by personal capabilities and environmental factors. There are also limitations to this theory. First, it assumes that environmental alterations will result in a corresponding change in the individual. The theory is structured loosely and lacks clarity on each factor's specific influence on behavior (LaMorte, 2022).

### ***3.3 Social Exchange Theory***

The social exchange theory is a conceptual framework that explains social interactions and relationships based on exchanges between individuals or groups. It posits that individuals engage in social relationships and interactions with the expectation of receiving rewards and minimizing costs. Emotions are vital in social exchange theory; emotions shape future individual exchanges and relationships. The presence and nature of emotions resulting from exchanges can significantly influence individuals' willingness to engage in future exchanges and the development of relationships. Positive emotions evoke the likelihood of further exchanges and strengthening relationships among individuals. In addition, part of the exchange theory is the idea of self-interest and a focus on increasing gains, so given this assumption, a positive exchange is only sometimes expected. Two guiding principles are as follows: (a) behaviors that generate rewarding consequences for the actor are repeated, and (b) actors stay in relations and groups from which they receive rewards that are comparatively better than rewards available elsewhere (Lawler & Thye, 2006). Rooted in the idea of this social exchange theory, there is instability due to incentives, values, and preferences. Maintaining solid social order becomes difficult because there is a need for stable structures and incentives that drive repetitive patterns of behavior and

interaction. Emotional connection stabilizes people in culture and promotes cohesion in social exchange.

### ***3.4 Social Influence Theories***

Social influence theories explore how individuals are affected by the actions, attitudes, and opinions of others within their social environment. One prominent theory in this field is the social identity theory, suggested by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s. This theory posits that individuals strive to maintain a positive self-concept by identifying with particular social groups and comparing them favorably. Consequently, people may conform to the norms and behaviors of their ingroup to enhance their self-esteem and social identity. Additionally, as studied by Asch in his classic experiments, the conformity phenomenon highlights the power of group pressure in shaping individual behavior. These experiments demonstrated that individuals often conform to group opinions even when they contradict their perceptions, illustrating the influence of social norms and the desire for social acceptance. Furthermore, the diffusion of responsibility theory suggests that individuals may feel less accountable for their actions when they are part of a larger group, leading to bystander apathy in situations requiring intervention. Overall, social influence theories provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of human behavior within social contexts, shedding light on the mechanisms underlying conformity, obedience, and group dynamics (Davlembayeva & Papagiannidis, 2024).

### ***3.5 Social Comparison Theory***

Social comparison theory, introduced by Leon Festinger in 1954, posits that individuals gauge their personal and social worth by comparing themselves to others. This comparison occurs across various domains, such as appearance and abilities, and influences self-evaluations. People commonly engage in upward comparison, where they assess themselves against those perceived as better, aiming for improvement, and downward comparison, where they often compare themselves to those perceived as worse, to boost self-esteem. Festinger believed these comparisons help individuals establish benchmarks for self-evaluation and motivate improvement. The social comparison process involves evaluating attitudes, abilities, and traits relative to others, typically within similar peer groups. Upward comparisons spur aspirations for enhancement, while downward comparisons can provide reassurance or confidence. However, the outcomes of these comparisons can vary. Ineffective comparisons may lead to overestimating abilities, while accurate assessments can

guide behavior and motivation. Awareness of the impact of social comparison on self-belief, confidence, and motivation is crucial, as both positive and negative comparisons can influence behavior and self-perception. Social comparison theory is views of oneself by evaluating one's abilities and attitudes. Within these evaluations, you relate it to others, playing a significant role in self-image and subjective well-being. The three types of social comparison are proposed in such theories: upward social comparison, downward social comparison, and lateral social comparison. Upward social comparison is when someone is being judged to be better than oneself and comparing it. Downward social comparison is being deemed unsuitable as oneself and comparing this. Lastly, social comparison with someone who is more or less than equal. There have been upward comparisons to promote a sense of inferiority; there is an association with adverse changes in self-concept. With suggestions from research, upward comparisons may promote inspiration and be associated with positive changes in self-concept (Festinger, 1954; Cherry, 2022).

### ***3.6 Social Impact Theory***

Social impact theory is a concept that explains how other people affect an individual. It refers to a person's impact on another individual, which is determined by the immediacy, strength, and number of people involved. This impact can be calculated using a power function. Social impact theory suggests that daily tasks and interactions with others significantly shape social impact. This impact can be positive or negative and affects lives in every interaction with others. The theory also suggests that social influence is more significant in larger crowds, such as concerts. According to Latané's theory, individuals can be both the sources and targets of social influence. The likelihood of responding to social influence increases with the source's strength, the immediacy of the event, and the number of sources exerting the impact (Mcleod, 2023).

### ***3.7 Social Constructionism***

According to social constructionism, humans tend to place more emphasis on certain categories over others, even if these categories do not accurately reflect true divisions. Categories are not fixed or "natural," and their boundaries are constantly shifting. They are contested and redefined across different societies and historical periods. Therefore, the social constructionist perspective focuses on the meaning that is created through defining and categorizing groups of people, experiences, and reality within cultural contexts (Subramaniam, 2014).

### ***3.8 Symbolic Interactionism***

Symbolic interactionism is a social theoretical framework developed by George Herbert Mead and Max Weber. This theory assumes that people respond to different elements of their environments based on the subjective meanings they attach to them. These meanings are created and modified through social interaction that involves symbolic communication with other people. According to this perspective, society is the result of shared symbols, such as language. The social world is constructed through the meanings that individuals attach to events and social interactions, and these symbols are transmitted across generations through language. In simple terms, people in society understand their social worlds through communication, the exchange of meaning through language and symbols. Symbolic interactionism focuses on the subjective viewpoints of individuals and how they make sense of the world from their perspective, instead of addressing how institutions objectively define and affect individuals. A central concept of symbolic interactionism is the self, which allows to calculate the effects of actions. However, this theory has been criticized for ignoring the emotional side of the self as a basis for social interaction (Mardon et al., 2021).

### ***3.9 Social Penetration Theory***

Social Penetration Theory, developed by psychologists Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor, proposes that interpersonal relationships are built through gradual and systematic self-disclosure. As individuals reveal more personal information to each other, their relationship deepens. This theory suggests that self-disclosure happens in layers, comparable to peeling back the layers of an onion, where the outer layers represent superficial information, and the inner layers represent deeper, more intimate details. The theory stresses the importance of reciprocity in self-disclosure, as both individuals must share personal information to establish trust and closeness in the relationship (Carpenter & Greene, 2015).

### ***3.10 Attribution and Drive Theories***

Attribution theory provides a framework for understanding how people interpret and explain the causes of behavior, events, and outcomes. When individuals perceive

information, they use it to form an explanation for the cause. Depending on the situation, motives can be influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include personality, ability, and intentions, while external factors involve situational influences and environmental conditions. Attribution theory provides a framework for understanding how people interpret and explain the causes of behavior, events, and outcomes. When individuals perceive information, they use it to form an explanation for the cause. Depending on the situation, motives can be influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include personality, ability, and intentions, while external factors involve situational influences and environmental conditions (McLeod, 2023).

### ***3.11 Elaboration Likelihood Model***

Richard Petty and John Cacioppo founded the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which describes the two main strategies for persuasion. The first strategy is established by considering central arguments, and the other on inferences and associations made from surrounding cues in the context of persuasion. One's elaboration likelihood will be high or low about one's ability and motivation. When motivation is higher, information should be processed through the central path. When motivation is low, the data will be processed through the peripheral paths, requiring less concerted effort. The ELM is often utilized by marketing researchers to assess changes in the attitudes of consumers (Kitchen et al., 2014).

### ***3.12 Motivation Crowding Theory***

The theory explores the crowding-out and crowding-in effects in economics, particularly regarding intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While economic models often focus on extrinsic motivations, it acknowledges the importance of intrinsic motivation, albeit its complexity in measurement. Motivation Crowding Theory bridges economic and psychological theories by examining the interaction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, providing a nuanced perspective on behavior in various financial and social contexts (Frey & Jegan, 2000).

### ***3.13 Observational Learning Theory (social learning)***

Observational learning theory is psychological and behavioral science focused on understanding how behavior changes through observation. It thoroughly examines various behavior interpretations, introduces the neurobehavioral perspective to address existing challenges, and discusses its implications for comprehending complex behaviors. It is the process of learning from watching the sociological environment. Understanding the

development of social perception contributes to this theory; as people watch and observe, they create systems of cognitive organization. When they can separate and perceive these environments of social observation, they learn and develop actions and perceptions from these (Fryling et al., 2011).

### ***3.14 Positioning Theory***

As articulated by Rom Harré, positioning theory emphasizes unequal access to rights and duties within social interactions, determining who can employ specific discourses. It revolves around using language to locate oneself and others, assigning rights and obligations, thereby carrying moral implications. Initially emerging in gender studies, mainly through the works of scholars like Bronwyn Davies, it draws from post-structuralist and feminist theories (Harré, 2009). The foundational concepts of positioning theory elucidate its relevance in understanding discourse, subjectivity, and desire. Positioning theory emerged from social constructionist perspectives, particularly within gender studies, emphasizing the dynamic nature of social interactions, where individuals negotiate their positions through language and discourse. Additionally, positioning theory offers valuable insights into the complexities of desire within social contexts, extending its application beyond interpersonal interactions to broader societal phenomena (Peters & Appel, 1996).

### ***3.15 Schemata Theory***

Schemata theory models assume that a person receives incomplete, inaccurate, and unreliable information. It then describes how that person evaluates and makes sense of that information by selecting a pre-existing schema to interpret the information they are receiving. The theory also highlights how individuals adjust their understanding of situations depending on the chosen schemata's mental structures and how that influences the understanding of the information they may receive. Schemata theory "is also used as a framework for a normative analysis of the selection of schemata" (Axelrod, 1973), meaning the theory is used to determine how individuals choose and apply the mental structures to interpret information in a way that aligns with the world around them.

### ***3.16 Self-Determination Theory***

Self-determination theory (SDT) is rooted in humanistic psychology and emphasizes a first-person perspective on motivation and personality. It posits that individuals naturally move toward growth through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Examining the frameworks of the self-determination theory is

essential for understanding human motivation and personality, which emphasizes people's inherent tendencies toward growth and self-actualization through satisfying basic psychological needs. SDT has emerged as a dominant paradigm for identifying universals in human nature, individual differentiating factors, and human experiences, as well as in significant sectors such as education, work, personal relationships, and psychotherapy. In their work, Koole et al. (2018) review empirical support for the self-determination and personality systems theories and how these concepts relate to new empirical studies on internalization, vitality, and performance flow. They conclude that SDT and PSI theory provide complementary insights into obtaining one's full potential. Edward Deci and Richard Ryan developed SDT in the 1980s. The SDT emphasizes people's subjective experience as the proximal motivational force. For example, monetary rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation if people perceive them as controlling but can enhance intrinsic motivation if seen as a sign of respect. Self-determination can be divided into six micro theories: cognitive evaluation, organismic integration, causality orientations, basic needs, goal contents, and relationship motivation. The SDT states that people reach their maximum potential when essential psychological requirements, like autonomy, competence, and fully developed connections, are met. Note that fully functioning individuals can form and enact intentions, learn from negative experiences, and affect regulation that may occur via social support or self-regulatory skills. Research methods using the STD involve surveys, longitudinal studies, experience sampling, and behavioral experiments. Significant findings demonstrate that psychological need satisfaction predicts intrinsic motives and well-being.

### ***3.17 Self-Perception Theory***

Self-perception theory, formulated by social psychologist Daryl Bem in 1967, posits that individuals develop their attitudes and beliefs by observing their behavior and drawing inferences from it. Unlike traditional theories of attitude formation, which emphasize the role of internal factors such as values and preferences, self-perception theory suggests that people often infer their attitudes from their actions when they are unclear or ambiguous. For example, if someone regularly volunteers at a local charity, they may infer they are compassionate or altruistic. Similarly, if individuals consistently choose healthy food options, they may conclude that they prioritize health and wellness. Self-perception theory suggests that individuals interpret their behavior much like they would interpret the behavior of others, using it as a basis for understanding and constructing their self-concept. This



theory has significant implications for understanding how people form attitudes, make decisions, and develop their identities, as it underscores the role of self-observation and interpretation in shaping one's beliefs and values. Additionally, self-perception theory has been applied in various domains, including psychology, marketing, and organizational behavior, offering valuable insights into human cognition and behavior (Robak et al., 2001).

### ***3.18 Self-Verification Theory***

Self-verification theory suggests that individuals desire others to perceive them in alignment with their self-perceptions, even if these views are negative. For instance, individuals who view themselves as likable prefer others to see them similarly, while those who perceive themselves as unlikable seek confirmation of this perception. This pursuit of self-verification is motivated by the desire for coherence and predictability in the world, as self-confirming evaluations facilitate smoother social interactions by guiding behavior and clarifying expectations. Individuals actively seek self-verification by selecting interactions and environments likely to reinforce their self-conceptions, and within relationships, they elicit confirming reactions from partners. Feedback about the self is processed in a manner that upholds existing self-views, promoting coherence, reducing anxiety, enhancing group dynamics, and challenging social stereotypes. However, for individuals with excessively negative self-perceptions, self-verification can impede positive change and exacerbate their life circumstances (Burger et al., 1999).

### ***3.19 Socioemotional Selectivity Theory***

This is essentially a lifespan theory, a theory of lifespan development. When people age, there is a different type of motivation. People reorganize their goals to be meaningful emotionally, compared to those oriented to the future. This theory predicts that people who are older and have constraints in different situations have a greater attachment to the greater importance of emotional increase with a greater significance to others than those who are younger (Raisz, 2005).

### ***3.20 System Justification Theory***

System justification theory attempts to explain why members of disadvantaged groups may become accepting of their disadvantaged position. It captures social and psychological needs to support the status quo and see it as good, fair, natural, desirable, and inevitable. Rationalization of the status quo, internalization of inequality, relations among ego, group, and system justification motives, and reduction of ideological dissonance are

some of the underpinnings of system justification among disadvantaged group members. According to system justification theory, people are motivated to defend, bolster, and justify prevailing social, economic, and political arrangements depending on situational and dispositional factors. System justification motivation is theorized to manifest itself in several ways, occur non-conscious and explicitly, and serve underlying epistemic, existential, and relational needs (Jost & Toorn, 2012; Jost, 2020).

### ***3.21 Terror Management Theory***

People manage death-related anxiety through the meaning provided by their cultural worldviews and the sense of personal value provided by self-esteem. Furthermore, terror management theory is both a social and evolutionary psychology theory. Terror management theory suggests groups, and even entire societies, may make or delay certain decisions based on such anxieties. People may act to gain comfort from avoiding thoughts of death or reassurance that their ideas will live on after they die. The exorbitant measures humans may take to avoid thinking about their mortality can be potentially beneficial or incredibly hazardous. While terror management theory primarily centers on the human response to death-related anxieties, it also serves as a valuable lens through which we can examine human fears and phobias to develop deeper insights into human behavior on a broader spectrum (Solomon, 2017).

### ***3.22 Triangular Theory of Love***

The triangular theory of love explains the topic of love in an interpersonal relationship. Psychologist Robert Sternberg's theory describes types of love based on three scales: intimacy, passion, and commitment. It is essential to recognize that a relationship based on a single element is less likely to survive than one based on two or more. Different stages and types of love can be explained as combinations of these three elements. For example, the relative emphasis of each component changes over time as an adult romantic relationship develops (Sternberg, 1986).

## **4. Conclusion**

Social cognition, a significant aspect of social psychology, deals with how individuals react to social stimuli and how their actions affect others. This involves understanding cognitive processes like perception, attention, memory, and action planning. This research

aims to provide answers for complicated social phenomena and contribute to the creation of cohesive social communities. In this literature review, the study focused on current works highlighting identity, including struggles over identities based on ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, class, age, and social inequalities, as well as advocating for a politicized social psychology of identities that draws together the framework of everyday activities and the sociocultural contexts in which they are experienced. A big emphasis is placed on the significance of agent-based modeling in understanding social and psychological phenomena, recognizing that total unbiased self-knowledge is not realistically achievable due to the deep-rooted nature of bias within individuals.

In recent years, ethical, religious, and cultural conversations around diversity have become top topics of conversation around the globe. Social psychologists have particularly started to gain interest in the role of the ideologies that shape the correlation between groups. Ideologies that evaluate intergroup thinking, assimilation, color blindness, and multiculturalism are incredibly useful for analyzing the social bases of identity and the intersectionality of those identities. Such identities are discussed through geographic and virtual space and how their struggle is connected to social inequalities, nationalisms, and social movements. The postmodernist concept of identities is that identity is fluid, multidimensional, personalized social constructions that reference socio-historical contexts.

The theories discussed are all related to social psychology. Each theory's goal and technique examines human behavior, social interactions, and decision-making. With different methodologies, some are more effective and accurate than others, and many of these theories are debated among researchers and academics. This must be considered when applying these theories to social situations and further research. However, the theories contain valuable information when understanding human behavior in daily life.

This research paper provides an in-depth analysis of social psychology and explores various related theories. The paper delves into how these theories explain human behavior within social psychology. Understanding these theories is crucial because it affects people in the environment. Being more educated and aware of social psychology allows one to understand decision-making processes in social situations better. Social psychology studies how people think, feel, and act in social situations. Through various theories and approaches, it helps understand why people behave the way they do in groups and societies. Studying

concepts like social influence and intergroup relations provides valuable insights into human behavior and helps address real-life issues. Social psychology helps better understand oneself and others, fostering empathy and stronger community connections. The paper explores various aspects of social psychology, such as social identity theory, social cognitive theory, and social influence. These theories help better understand how individuals perceive themselves and others, form impressions and attitudes, and how the social environment influences them. It also examined topics such as conformity, obedience, prejudice, and group dynamics, which highlight the profound impact of social factors on individual thoughts, feelings, and actions. By synthesizing and analyzing findings from a wide range of studies and experiments, this paper contributes to the broader body of knowledge in social psychology, emphasizing the importance of considering social context in understanding human behavior. Social psychology explores how people interact in groups, perceive others, and form opinions about social issues. Recent research has focused on topics like diversity and how different ideologies affect how people see each other.

Through experiments like the famous Asch experiment, people can change their behavior to fit in with others. As the world becomes more diverse, social psychology helps understand and navigate these complex social dynamics, aiming to promote understanding and harmony among different groups. In essence, social psychology looks at how individuals think, process information, and interpret their surroundings within social contexts daily. Various theories within this field offer different approaches to understanding human behavior, with some being more effective than others in explaining social interactions. Among these theories, social perception theory stands out as it sheds light on how individuals perceive themselves and acquire knowledge. Social psychology enables to comprehend why behavior might vary in groups and how the group's dynamics influence individual. It is always essential to understand how social factors influence people. By analyzing different topics of social psychology, it can connect different issues. A deep understanding of social psychology explores how people interact and function daily. According to Mehrad et al. (2024), people can learn to recognize how their brains process information and how to manipulate it in various social situations. Social psychology's "social" aspect is crucial in understanding how humans relate to each other and their surroundings. The thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are unique and influenced by real or imagined social norms. Social

psychology theories help understand everyone's complex and varied emotional, social, and behavioral responses. Everyone's social psychology is unique since no two people are the same.

According to Mehrad et al. (2023), social psychology is a field of study that focuses on human behavior. It is based on how people communicate and interact socially in different cultures and societies, which is considered critically important. In general, social psychology examines the impact of social influences on individuals in social settings and how they approach obstacles. The field also emphasizes various models and theories that are relevant to the subject. It is fascinating how different social worlds function within themselves and with one another. Also, this field of psychology insists on considering other people's attitudes and social communication, which can be important in each society and community.

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