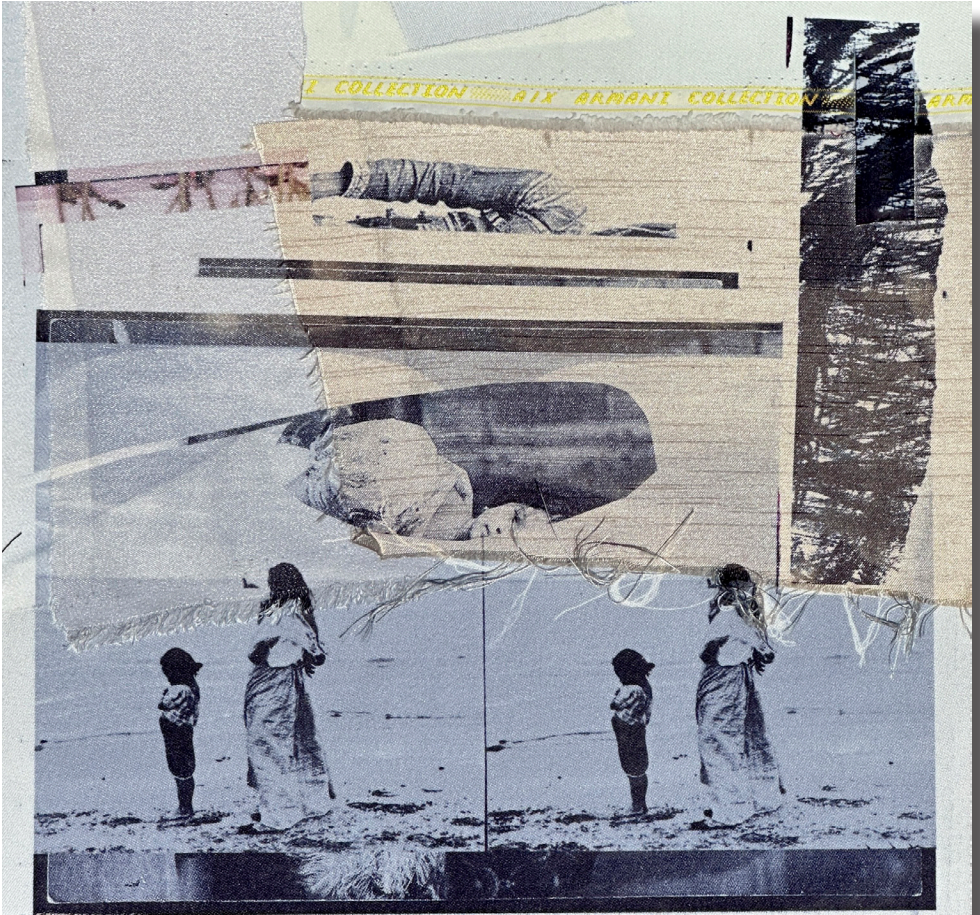


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**A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO
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Editor's Notes

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” — Zora Neale Hurston

“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.” — Carl Sagan

Research begins with curiosity but gains meaning when it illuminates the complexities of human life, society, and knowledge. Each study published in the Silliman Journal contributes to this shared pursuit of understanding, probing questions about culture, education, resilience, governance, and community life. The first issue of 2026 gathers a diverse collection of scholarship that reflects the interdisciplinary character of contemporary research while remaining grounded in issues that matter to communities and institutions.

This issue opens with a study by Girlie Ann Dayap, Joseph E. Padilla, and Corazon A. Padilla, who examine the representation of women in the 2023 film *Barbie* through a multimodal gender discourse analysis. Drawing on linguistic and visual frameworks, the study reveals how the film simultaneously challenges and reproduces post-feminist narratives by portraying women as empowered yet still shaped by enduring gender expectations. The article invites readers to reconsider how popular culture constructs and negotiates ideas of femininity in contemporary society. Continuing the discussion of gender and communication, Daisy Mae Catubigan, Joseph E. Padilla, and Corazon A. Padilla explore compliment response strategies among Tourism Management students at Visayas State University. Using pragmatic and sociolinguistic frameworks, the study shows how gendered conversational styles influence how individuals accept, evade, or respond to compliments. Their findings offer insight into everyday linguistic behavior and demonstrate how subtle communicative patterns reflect broader social dynamics.

The issue also features Mun Aung and Jaruvic C. Rafols' investigation into resilience and coping strategies among first-year students in a liberal arts program in Myanmar. Their research highlights the prominence of task-oriented coping and its positive association with resilience, suggesting that proactive problem-solving approaches play a significant role in how students navigate academic and personal challenges. The study underscores the importance of fostering resilience in higher education environments that increasingly confront uncertainty and change.

In the field of educational leadership, Kendrick M. Kitane and

Dave E. Marcial examine the instructional supervisory practices of Master Teachers in relation to the VUCA framework—volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—within the Philippine education system. The study documents strong supervisory practices and proposes the K-VOLT framework as a leadership model that can guide educators as they respond to the evolving demands of contemporary schooling.

Finally, Ian Mark Q. Nacaya, Ester L. Raagas, and Astrid L. Sinco turn our attention to disaster governance at the community level. Their mixed-methods study evaluates the performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees in the Tagoloan River Basin, revealing both the commitment of local actors and the structural challenges they face. The authors highlight the critical need for stronger institutional support, sustained financing, and enhanced leadership capacity to ensure effective disaster rehabilitation and recovery.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue illustrate the breadth of inquiry that defines scholarly work—from media and language studies to educational leadership, psychology, and disaster governance. Each article, in its own way, reminds us that research is not merely an academic exercise but a means of understanding the world and improving the systems and communities we inhabit.

The cover art is adapted from an untitled work by visual artist and fashion designer Dan Ryan Duran. It features a print collage of vintage Philippine photographs rendered on retazzo fabric.

Enjoy!

Warlito S. Caturay Jr. , PhD

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN BARBIE (2023) FILM: A MULTIMODAL GENDER DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examined the representation of women in the Barbie (2023) film through a multimodal gender discourse analysis integrating linguistic and visual modes. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, focusing on transcribed utterances and selected visual figures featuring the film's central female characters, Stereotypical Barbie and Gloria. Guided by Lakoff's (1975) women's language theory and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, the analysis revealed that nine out of ten linguistic features appeared in the data, with hedges and intensifiers occurring most frequently, indicating patterns of emotional expressivity associated with traditional femininity. Furthermore, visual findings showed a dominant use of offer images, eye-level shots, and moderate social distance, fostering audience connection and relatability. At the same time, modality shifts between Barbie Land and the Real World reflected ideological contrasts between idealization and realism. Critically, the study highlights how these multimodal resources both align with and complicate post-feminist discourses by portraying women as expressive and empowered yet still shaped by prevailing gender expectations. The findings contribute to broader debates in multimodality, film studies, and media literacy by illustrating how cinematic techniques shape the public's reading of femininity and offering analytical tools for understanding gendered meaning-making in contemporary media.

Keywords: Women's Language Features, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Gender Representation, Visual Grammar

Introduction

The representation of women in the media has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate. Over the years, the portrayal of gender roles in movies has evolved, reflecting shifts in cultural attitudes influenced by feminist perspectives. Film, as a form of mass media, is a powerful tool for conveying messages to society through images and dialogue, communicating ideas, emotions, and stories (Malisi, Sibram, & Surawan, 2023). It not only serves as a source of entertainment and cultural expression but also plays a significant role in shaping societal values and perspectives. Through storytelling and role-playing, films can influence public opinion and shape cultural norms such as gender perceptions (Garczewska, 2019).

The notable *Barbie* film, released in 2023, has significant potential to shape society's perceptions of gender roles through popular culture. *Barbie*, as both a doll and a cultural icon, has been at the center of these discussions, with its portrayal of women's issues being a significant focus of research. The recent *Barbie* (2023) is a fantasy comedy film directed by Greta Gerwig that reignited conversations about gender representation, particularly issues related to women. Based on Mattel's Barbie fashion dolls, it is the first live-action Barbie film after numerous animated films. It was released on July 21, 2023, and became a major hit, largely due to its satirical portrayal of patriarchy and the depiction of women in "Barbie land." The film became highly popular, grossing over \$1.03 billion worldwide (Rothenberg, 2023). Its exploration of womanhood and girlhood resonated with many viewers, who found its message relatable. In fact, the *Barbie* (2023) film premiered in the Philippines on July 19, 2023, and received significant attention there, given the global popularity of the Barbie brand and its exploration of gender and cultural themes, as well as strong local interest in its portrayal of women (Llemit, 2023). The story begins when *Barbie* (Margot Robbie) lives in a utopian matriarchy, only to enter the real world, where she faces patriarchy and objectification, and ultimately embraces her humanity. The *Barbie* film has the potential to shape society's perception of gender roles. Its characters and narratives can shape understanding of gender roles, especially by helping children grasp the diverse roles men and women can play.

Hence, this paper aimed to investigate how women were represented in the *Barbie* (2023) film through language and visual modes. While previous studies had explored gender portrayals in *Barbie* (2023), they lacked a multimodal perspective combining linguistic and visual analysis. This created a methodological gap regarding how both visual and linguistic

elements are integrated to represent women in the film. To address this gap, this study utilized a multimodal discourse approach focusing on the linguistic and visual aspects of the Barbie film. By applying Robin Lakoff's characters. This approach provided a comprehensive perspective on how linguistic and visual elements interacted to shape gender representation in contemporary media.

Review of Literature

The following review highlights the theoretical frameworks mainly utilized in this study. Robin Lakoff's (1975) *Women's Language Theory* guides the analysis of female speech features. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Visual Grammar* provides the framework for analyzing the interactional semiotic function in visual communication.

Women's Language Features

In 1975, linguist Robin Lakoff became interested in language use. The term women's language features was first coined by Lakoff (1975). Women's language features are linguistic patterns that women use more often than men. A woman will receive criticism if her speech style does not resemble that of a "lady" (a classy woman), as it is considered unfeminine. In her paper, she presented data gathered through introspection, interviews, and conversations with her acquaintances, and identified features common to all the women she considered. This paper focuses on the language features she claims in her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), which are as follows:

Lexical hedges or Fillers: Lakoff (1975) claims that hedging is used to avoid making strong statements (similarly to intensifiers), since women's language is less powerful, and women are portrayed as insecure most of the time. Lakoff (1975), as cited by Itmeizeh and Ma'ayeh (2017, p. 35), distinguishes four types of hedges. The first type is to express uncertainty, such as 'well' and 'kinda/kind of'. The second type is a hedge used for politeness, such as 'sorta' or 'sort of'. The next type is to express that the speaker is sure of the truth of a statement to attract the listener's attention, e.g., you know. The last type is used as a preface to a statement or question, e.g., I guess, I wonder, and I think. In addition to lessening the force of a statement, hedges function as fillers. It refers to meaningless words that women always use. Jonsson (2016) defines fillers as "any sound we make to fill a pause" (p. 7). Examples of fillers include "um," "oh," and "uh."

Intensifiers: Women tend to use intensifiers, such as so or absolute superlatives (like very, really, or utterly) to express their feelings or to avoid committing themselves to strong opinions. While so is usually used by women to describe their feelings, men avoid using it to refer to anything personal (Lakoff, 1975, p. 48). Similarly, Holmes (2013) states that intensifiers aim to reinforce meaning and ensure that the interlocutor receives the message, e.g., really, so, such, quite, and very. Women use intensifiers to give their talk greater emphasis, impress their interlocutors, and increase the likelihood of acceptance and confirmation, as Sardabi and Afghari (2015) state.

Tag questions: Tag questions fall between an explicit declaration and a yes-no question and follow a syntactic rule that women tend to use more than men (Lakoff, 1975). They are often used to make a claim when the speaker is unsure of its truth. Tag questions can be used in various contexts, such as confirming something already known, corroborating an opinion, or checking whether something is true. In other cases, tag questions are used when the speaker makes a claim but is not entirely sure it is true. Women like to use tag questions because they make the tone less tense.

Emphatic stress: Lakoff (1975) states that Emphatic stress is a term to emphasize the most important word in a speaker's statement. It refers to situations in which a speaker emphasizes certain words or parts of an expression or utterance. Women utilize this characteristic to accentuate and strengthen their speech, or to express more stress. It happens when a woman wants to make a stronger statement. For instance, "It was a BRILLIANT performance". The capitalized word "brilliant" shows that the speaker wants to strengthen the meaning of the utterance. Women can use italics, color, repetition, bold, capital letters, or complex lettering to highlight or reinforce certain words and stress the opinion in written text (Pebrianti, 2013).

Rising intonation on declaratives: Women tend to change their intonation in declaratives again to avoid making strong statements. As explained in Lakoff (1975), "There is a peculiar sentence intonation-pattern, found in English as far as I know only among women, which has the form of a declarative answer to a question, and is used as such, but has the rising inflection typical of a yes-no question, as well as being especially hesitant." (pp. 49-50). An example might be when someone answers a question. However, they want the listener to decide for them: "(A) When will dinner be ready? (B) Oh... around six o'clock..." (Lakoff, 1975, p. 5).

Avoidance of strong swear words: Women tend to use less strong words in their speech, as the use of swear words like shit, damn, or hell is not well seen when used by women. Instead of swearing words, women tend to use terms classified as 'meaningless' particles or weaker expletives. These

are words that have no referent in interaction but that “define the social context of an utterance, indicate the relationship the speaker feels between himself and his addressee, between himself and what he is talking about” (Lakoff, 1975, p. 44). For example, expressions such as oh dear, goodness, oh fudge, or dear me reflect that the addressee is known to the person speaking.

Super polite form: Politeness is defined by Holmes (2013) as the “behaviour which is somewhat formal and distancing, where the intention is not to intrude or impose”. Some examples of polite behaviors might include “apologising for an intrusion, opening the door for another, inviting a new neighbour in for a cup of tea, using courtesy titles like sir and madam” (Holmes, 2013). Politeness particles are terms that soften statements so that they “prevent the expression of strong statements” (Lakoff, 1975, p. 51). As Lakoff (1975) further explained, “women are believed to be experts of euphemism and know the right things to say to other people.” For example, women tend to say, “would you please close the door?” which shows a ‘super polite’ form rather than “would you close the door?” which shows usual polite form.

Empty adjectives: Adjectives that have the function of expressing the feeling of the speaker, in relation to admiration or approbation. This category includes some neutral adjectives, such as great, terrific, cool, and neat, and others that are representative of women’s speech, such as adorable, charming, sweet, lovely, and divine (Lakoff, 1975, p. 45). Women are free to choose to use the word neutral or women-only, whereas if men use the word women-only it will look unmasculine. The use of empty adjectives in women’s language shows that the speaker wants to show the relationship between her emotional expression and the person being addressed.

Precise color terms: According to Lakoff (1975), women have a wider lexical variety than men. A more specific example is terms related to colors. Women say the colors are frequently used, while men consider them unrealistic. Commonly used words in women’s active vocabulary include beige, lavender, maroon, mauve, magenta, mustard, pink, navy, nude, and aquamarine. Women often use precise discrimination, such as fuchsia, beige, coral, mocha, and magenta. It is a vocabulary commonly used by women, not men.

Hypercorrect grammar: The final characteristic of women’s speech is Hypercorrect grammar. According to Lakoff (1975), women are said to adhere more strictly to grammatical rules, often avoiding contractions or colloquialisms. Lakoff attributes this to societal pressures for women to conform to norms of “ladylike” behavior, as deviations might be judged more harshly. Women also pay more attention to the use of standardized language

than men do, so they are more strict about the rules of language use. They avoid using modified words like am not to ain't or don't know to dunno or dropping the g in verbs such as goin or singin, because it will make their utterances sound rough for the recipients.

Visual Grammar

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar outlines a method to analyze how depicted elements combine in texts to form complete and coherent visual messages. They posited that visual symbols, like language, perform three metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional. They argued that what is conveyed through linguistic choices—such as word selection and semantic structures—can similarly be expressed through visual elements like line, color, and perspective. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) assert, “the visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message” (p. 18), meaning it carries its own set of meanings alongside or even separate from the verbal narrative. For this reason, visual grammar provides an essential toolkit for decoding the visual representations of women in the *Barbie* (2023) film, uncovering the implicit visual meanings that shape perceptions of femininity. However, interactive meaning is the most essential one among the three meanings of images because of its communicative feature.

Interactional Semiotic Function

The interactional semiotic function considers the viewer's relationship to the represented characters (both interactive and represented). Key elements, such as contact, attitude, social distance, and modality, reveal how characters relate to each other and to the audience. Halliday (1994) describes this function as the interpersonal metafunction, which refers to the encoding of relationships among communicative participants. For Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), “any mode has to represent a particular social relationship between the producer, the viewer, and the object represented” (p. 42). As viewers interact with the film, they form an imaginary connection with the depicted participants or with the interactive participants (image producers).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe how visual resources in images represent interactions not only among depicted people, places, and objects (represented participants) but also between these subjects and viewers (interactive participants). This interaction creates three types of

relationships: (1) between the depicted elements themselves, (2) between viewers and the depicted elements (reflecting viewers' attitudes toward them), and (3) between the viewers and producers of the image, highlighting the communicative intent behind the visual design.

The use of gaze, for instance, plays a significant role in creating a contact or pseudo-social bond with the viewer, even at an imaginary level. When characters in an image look directly at the viewer, a “demand” is created, as if they were seeking engagement or a response. This engagement can vary depending on the character’s expression; a smile might invite friendliness, whereas a cold stare can create distance. When characters do not look at the viewer, the interaction is presented as an “offer,” positioning the viewer as an observer rather than a participant. Here, viewers take on the role of “invisible onlookers,” examining characters as objects of observation rather than directly engaging with them (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 119).

Attitude, related to angle or perspective, shapes the viewer’s perception of the characters. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) discussed two types of angles: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal angle emphasizes involvement or detachment by positioning participants as parallel, aligned, or divergent. A frontal horizontal angle, for example, indicates involvement, inviting viewers to engage with the character directly. In contrast, an oblique angle conveys detachment, positioning the viewer as an outsider.

Meanwhile, the vertical angle shows power relations between the represented participant and the viewer. For Martin (1968), a high angle denotes the subject as inferior or insignificant, while a low angle denotes the subject as superior or conveys a sense of exaltation and triumph. However, no power relationship is involved when the angle is set at eye level, suggesting equality.

Social distance can reveal the level of affinity between participants. As in daily life, a shorter distance usually means a closer relationship. According to Horakik (2015), as cited by Padilla and Padilla (2023), this involves the level of viewers' involvement with the represented participants and the causal relationship of physical proximity in everyday interaction. Furthermore, in visual discourses, the choices of “close-up shot”, “medium shot”, and “long shot” suggest the interpersonal relations from intimacy to separation. Following Hall (1966), Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006, p.124-125) determined the following types of distance: intimate distance, close personal distance or the distance at which ‘one can hold or grasp the other person,’ far personal distance or the distance that ‘extends from a point that is just outside easy touching distance by one person to a point where two people

can touch fingers if they both extend their arms'; close social distance or the distance at which 'impersonal business occurs; far social distance or the distance where business and social interaction has a more formal and impersonal character; and public distance or the distance between people who are and are to remain strangers.' It can be inferred that the closer the represented participants are to the viewer, the more intimate the relationship becomes.

Finally, modality, or the degree of realism in an image, contributes to the interactional dimension by indicating how "real" or authentic the depiction is meant to appear. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) emphasize that modality is socially constructed and varies according to cultural standards of "natural" representation. Factors like color saturation, depth, and brightness are used by image producers to create high, medium, or low modality, thus shaping how viewers perceive the truth value or credibility of the scene. To create a high modality in visual content, image creators focus on several important elements: color, which is manipulated through saturation, variation, and adjustment; contextualization, or the expression of abstract ideas; representation, or the depiction of visual details; depth, or the use of perspective; illumination, or how light is used; and brightness, which refers to the lightness or darkness of the colors.

Critical Perspectives on the Frameworks

While this study adopts Lakoff's (1975) Women's Language Theory and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar as its primary analytical frameworks, it recognizes that both models have been subject to recent critique. For example, several studies argue that Lakoff's claims about "women's language" do not universally apply across contexts. Svendsen (2021) reviewed empirical evidence and noted that features such as hedges and tag questions do not exclusively index female uncertainty; in some cases, they perform strategic, relational, or discourse-management functions. Similarly, Ulianitckaia (2021) further emphasizes that gendered linguistic behavior is shaped by social and cultural conditions rather than being determined by biological sex, echoing broader feminist linguistic critiques that challenge essentialist views of gendered communication (Cameron, 1992; Mills, 2003), calling for a more flexible and context-sensitive use of Lakoff's framework. In line with Butler's (1990) notion of gender as performative rather than inherent, this study treats Lakoff's categories as heuristic tools rather than fixed indicators of feminine identity (prescriptive), allowing a more nuanced interpretation of the speech of Barbie (2023) characters.

Visual Grammar has also been subject to critical discussion. Although widely used, scholars argue that Kress and van Leeuwen's framework offers a generalized system that may not fully capture the complexity of dynamic filmic representations (Navarro & Adriano, 2024; Xu & Cao, 2023). Moving-image texts combine image, dialogue, sound, editing, and pacing, which can extend beyond static image analysis. By applying Visual Grammar to selected film figures from *Barbie* (2023), this study acknowledges these limitations while demonstrating that interactional choices—such as gaze, angle, social distance, and modality—remain productive lenses for examining gendered visual meaning. This critical stance positions the present research within ongoing debates about the adaptability of multimodal models to contemporary media forms.

Furthermore, post-feminist scholars argue that contemporary media often oscillate between empowerment and the reinforcement of traditional feminine ideals (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2004). The multimodal patterns observed in *Barbie* (2023)—such as the coexistence of linguistic vulnerability and visually agentive framings—reflect this tension. Rather than simply affirming empowerment narratives, the film's multimodal construction of femininity appears ambivalent: it foregrounds emotional expressiveness while simultaneously negotiating societal expectations. This critical engagement enables the findings to contribute more meaningfully to wider debates in feminist media studies, demonstrating how multimodal representations can both challenge and reproduce cultural understandings of gender.

Several studies employed multimodal discourse analysis to examine how films and other media use semiotic resources to convey meaning. For instance, Bateman et al. (2017) applied Kress and van Leeuwen's framework to explore how visuals, sound, and dialogue collaborate in films to shape narratives and engage viewers emotionally. Their study emphasized how these elements can reinforce or challenge genre conventions, illustrating the power of multimodal resources in filmmaking. O'Halloran (2004) analyzed cinematic texts, showing how visual techniques such as framing, lighting, and color work with dialogue to guide audience interpretation and evoke emotion. This highlighted the importance of considering both visual and linguistic modes in film analysis.

Specific to *Barbie* (2023), recent research has explored various aspects of the film's multimodal representation. He (2024) analyzed the *Barbie* (2023) movie poster using Halliday's systemic functional grammar and Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar, revealing how visual and textual elements construct the concepts of feminism and empowerment. Similarly,

Lau (2023) conducted a feminist multimodal analysis of dancing scenes in *Barbie* (2023), emphasizing the visual and audio modes to explore diversity and empowerment. Meanwhile, Zhou (2024) explored *Barbie* (2023) through Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, analyzing language and visuals in character interactions to uncover societal norms and gender dynamics. A similar study was conducted by Yakali (2024), who investigated masculinity in *Barbie* (2023) through Butler's gender theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, examining how male characters challenge traditional gender norms. Moreover, Li (2024) analyzed *Barbie* (2023) within the Hollywood industry's post-feminist narratives, critiquing the male gaze and exploring themes of self-identity and body acceptance.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how women are represented in the *Barbie* (2023) film. As Creswell (2012) notes, this approach allows for an in-depth examination of human behavior and communication through words, images, and actions. It was chosen to provide a detailed account of both verbal and visual elements as they appear in the film. Specifically, the qualitative data included the spoken utterances and visual scenes featuring the film's two main female characters, Stereotypical Barbie and Gloria. These elements were categorized and interpreted in tabular forms based on recurring linguistic and visual patterns, thereby offering a systematic account of how femininity is portrayed in media.

To obtain the data, the film *Barbie* (2023) served as the sole source. With a duration of 113 minutes and 54 seconds, the film was purposively selected for its thematic engagement with gender identity, its widespread exposure in Philippine media, and its use of English. Data were gathered through documentation, which involved observing multimodal resources (e.g., text, images, or videos), taking notes, and capturing scenes. The film was viewed using the Loklok application, and the official script transcript was downloaded from <https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/movies/barbie-2023-transcript/> to aid in identifying and verifying utterances. Subsequently, dialogues were cross-checked with on-screen subtitles for accuracy, after which utterances reflecting Lakoff's (1975) women's language features were manually coded. Visual data were obtained by capturing screenshots of key moments relevant to the analysis.

The data analysis was conducted in sequential stages. Initially, linguistic data were examined using Lakoff's Women's Language Theory.

Only dialogues spoken by the two main female characters were included because they carry the central narrative and embody the film's primary representations of femininity. Excerpts were selected if they contained at least one of Lakoff's women's language features, typically during key narrative moments illustrating emotional expression, conflict, or decision-making, and when they reflected shifts in character agency or interaction. Each feature (e.g., lexical hedges, tag questions, and intensifiers) was identified, classified, and counted to determine its prevalence in the selected characters' speech. Following this, visual figures were analyzed using the interactional semiotic function of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar, comprising four key elements: contact, attitude, social distance, and modality. Selection focused on scenes where gaze direction clearly indicated demand (direct gaze) or offer (indirect gaze) images; where camera angle—high, low, or eye-level—shaped perceived power relations; and where camera distance—close-up, medium, or long shot—significantly influenced viewer intimacy, emotional involvement, or social distance. Figures were also examined for modality contrasts between the hyper-stylized aesthetic of Barbie Land and the more realistic portrayal of the Real World. This selection procedure ensured that the analyzed data reflected the film's major multimodal strategies for constructing representations of women.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the feminist linguistic and visual analysis conducted on the Barbie (2023) film. Employing Lakoff's (1975) Women's Language Theory and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar, the study identified women's language features and explicated the construction of interactional meaning in the film.

Analysis of Women's Language Features

The first objective of this paper was to identify how female characters were represented based on women's language features. The analysis revealed various features, including lexical hedges, intensifiers, and emphatic stress. These were quantified and expressed as percentages based on their frequency of use by the main female characters. The analyses were divided into ten (10) sub-sections according to the type of language feature found. Each excerpt taken from the Barbie (2023) film was accompanied by its corresponding scene timeframe to indicate the data source. Moreover, some features of women's language identified by Lakoff (1975), such as emphatic stress and

rising intonation in declaratives, required audio analysis. To address this, the study employed Jefferson Transcription Notation to represent vocal features even in the absence of audio.

Among the ten (10) women’s language features identified by Robin Lakoff, only nine (9) features were identified in the utterances of the main characters. These included lexical hedges or fillers, intensifiers, tag questions, emphatic stress, rising intonation in declarative sentences, avoidance of strong swear words, super-polite forms, empty adjectives, and hypercorrect grammar. The precise color terms were not found in any of the utterances of the main characters.

The table below illustrates the frequency of the women’s language features found in the utterances of Barbie, Margot, and Gloria.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Women’s Language Features

| TYPES OF WOMEN’S LANGUAGE FEATURES | BARBIE MARGOT | GLORIA | FREQUENCY (F) | PERCENTAGE (%) |
|------------------------------------|---------------|--------|---------------|----------------|
| Lexical Hedge or Fillers | 74 | 15 | 89 | 31.44% |
| Intensifiers | 68 | 20 | 88 | 31.09% |
| Tag Question | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0.70 % |
| Emphatic Stress | 18 | 44 | 62 | 21.90% |
| Rising Intonation on Declarative | 7 | 3 | 10 | 3.53% |
| Avoidance Strong Swear Words | 5 | 2 | 7 | 2.47% |
| Super Polite Forms | 9 | 2 | 11 | 3.88% |
| Empty Adjective | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2.82% |
| Precise Color Terms | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0% |
| Hypercorrect Grammar | 3 | 3 | 6 | 2.12% |
| Total | | | 283 | 100% |

Table 1 above shows a total of 283 identified instances of women's language features. Among these, the most dominant feature is the use of lexical hedges or fillers, which occurred 89 times, making up 31.44% of the total. This is followed by the use of intensifiers, which appeared 88 times, accounting for 31.09% of the overall features observed. The third most frequent feature is emphatic stress, with 62 occurrences (21.90%), indicating its prominent role in expressing strong emotion or emphasis in speech. Meanwhile, features such as super polite forms (3.88%), rising intonation on declarative sentences (3.53%), and empty adjectives (2.82%) were also present but to a lesser extent. Moreover, less frequently occurring features include avoidance of strong swear words (7 instances, 2.47%) and hypercorrect grammar (6 instances, 2.12%). The least frequently used feature is the tag question, which only appeared 2 times (0.70%). Notably, the use of precise color terms was not found in any of the main female characters' utterances.

Lexical Hedge or Fillers

Hedges and fillers are expressions used to signal uncertainty, politeness, hesitation, or indirectness. In pragmatics, hedges are defined as sounds, words, or phrases that function to reduce the impact of assertive or forceful utterances between the speaker and the hearer. They are used in a sentence to suggest ambiguity, likelihood, caution, or indecision, as opposed to conveying full accuracy, assurance, confidence, or decisiveness. Lakoff (1975) defines hedges as “words or phrases that represent uncertainty,” including I think, it seems like, I guess, you know, well, perhaps, and maybe. Tamulis (2017) states that a filler is a word or sound used by a speaker to indicate a pause, hesitation, transition, or to hold their turn in conversation. It is said that women use fillers more often than men do. They tend to use fillers that match the rhythm or tone of their speech, such as uh, hm, and oh.

Data 1 (Scene 00:20:14 – 00:20:20)

Weird Barbie: Never seen that before.

Barbie Margot: Really?

Weird Barbie: Whoa.

Barbie Margot: Okay. Well, can you, you know, fix them?

The data above is from the conversation between Barbie Margot and Weird Barbie, shortly after Barbie Margot begins experiencing distressing changes in her appearance—most notably, the flattening of her feet. In a

panic, she visits “Weird Barbie,” a doll who has been labeled eccentric due to being played with too hard. Barbie, distressed and uncertain, seeks guidance on how to fix herself. Her tone is hesitant, and her language reflects this insecurity.

Barbie Margot’s use of “Well” and “you know” functions as classic lexical hedges and fillers. The filler “well” serves as a pause, allowing women a moment to consider their next words. Barbie also used the lexical hedge ‘you know’ in her answer. She used this to reinforce her opinion about what she is talking about. “You know” is often used to seek mutual understanding and implies shared knowledge, even when such knowledge might not exist, making it a polite strategy to mitigate imposition. These hedges reflect Barbie’s vulnerability and need for guidance. According to Lakoff (1975), women use such a feature more frequently as a linguistic strategy to remain non-confrontational, reflecting hesitation, doubt, and indirectness. Here, Barbie is uncertain of Weird Barbie’s abilities, so she uses hedges to make her request more socially acceptable and less demanding. This interpretation is further supported by Wulandari and Pusita (2024), who noted that this feature is also known as pauses, takes the form of phrases, or serves as fillers to show a lack of confidence or incomplete information. Furthermore, Azizah (2021) claims that fillers such as ‘well’ are used by female speakers as strategies to avoid being too direct and to seek agreement subtly.

While Lakoff’s (1975) claim that hedges reflect women’s uncertainty has been influential, modern feminist linguists argue that hedging can also signal strategic politeness rather than simply weakness. Holmes (2013) and Coates (2015) explain that hedges like ‘well’ and ‘you know’ often serve to build rapport, show empathy, and maintain conversational harmony. This means that Barbie’s hedging may reflect relational sensitivity rather than linguistic insecurity. Similarly, post-feminist theorists such as McRobbie (2004) and Gill (2007) argue that contemporary femininity often interweaves emotional expressiveness with empowered self-presentation, challenging earlier assumptions that features like hedging indicate passivity. Within this framework, Barbie’s use of hedges reflects a communicative style oriented toward relational awareness rather than linguistic uncertainty. As Genz and Brabon (2009) emphasize, post-feminist discourse positions women’s interactional sensitivity as a form of strategic agency rather than a sign of weakness. This aligns with Butler’s (1990) view of gender as performative, where linguistic choices help construct femininity as both relational and agentive. Contemporary critique also highlights that hedges are used by people of all genders in different contexts (Mills, 2003), suggesting that Lakoff’s framework, while foundational, may overgeneralize women’s

linguistic behavior. Even so, Barbie's use of hedges reveals how femininity is linguistically shaped through politeness, empathy, and social sensitivity.

Intensifiers

Both women and men use intensifiers, but women tend to use them more frequently (Lakoff, 1975). Intensifiers are words, usually adverbs or adjectives, that have little meaning on their own. However, they are used to strengthen or emphasize another adjective, verb, or adverb. Common examples include so, very, just, really, extremely, absolutely, and completely. These words help either reduce or increase the emotional intensity of a speaker's statement. Intensifiers can also subtly guide the listener's expected feelings toward what is being said. Talbot (2010) supports this claim, stating that women frequently use intensifiers in their speech to heighten their audience's feelings and emotions.

Data 2 (Scene 00:13:15 – 00:13:24)

Barbie Alexandra: This is a real rager, Barbie.

Barbie Margot: THANKS, BARBIE! Gosh, this night is just perfect.

Barbie Sharon: It's perfectly Perfect!

Barbie Emma: You look so beautiful, Barbie!

Barbie Margot: Thanks, Barbie. I feel so beautiful.

The data above is taken from the conversation between Barbie Margot and other Barbies. This scene happens during a joyful party at Barbie Margot's Dreamhouse. The place is full of energy as all the Barbies gather to dance, laugh, and celebrate together. Barbie Margot is in a good mood, smiling and interacting with the others. She felt so happy that night that she expressed a compliment, saying that the night was perfect.

The use of intensifiers in this exchange is prominent and intentional. Barbie Margot's phrase "Gosh, this night is just perfect" uses "just" as an intensifier to heighten the sense of completeness and perfection of the event. It reflects her overwhelming satisfaction, suggesting that nothing could make the night any better. When Barbie Emma compliments Margot by saying, "You look so beautiful," she uses "so" to strongly emphasize her appreciation for Margot's appearance. This word choice strengthens the compliment, making it more heartfelt and impactful, highlighting the emotionally expressive and affirming nature of women's speech. Therefore, this supports Lakoff's (1975) claim that intensifiers are employed to emphasize praise and strengthen statements. The moment also reflects

women's tendency to use supportive language that builds relationships, which is a central aspect of women's language patterns. This aligns with Rizki, EF, and Fauzi's (2022) study, which found that female characters frequently employed intensifiers such as *so* and *very* to stress emotional expression and amplify compliments, thereby reinforcing solidarity. This reflects a broader pattern in female discourse, where mutual appreciation and interpersonal connections are emphasized. Similarly, Holmes (2013) argues that intensifiers can also index stance-taking, enthusiasm, and interpersonal involvement. Rather than signaling linguistic weakness, intensifiers allow speakers, especially women, to heighten affect and strengthen interpersonal bonds.

Moreover, feminist discourse scholars note that women's use of amplifying language often reflects solidarity building rather than insecurity (Talbot, 2010). Thus, Barbie Margot's repeated use of *just* and *so* demonstrates her emotional alignment with other Barbies, expressing joy and social connection. Post-feminist interpretations would add that such expressive language both affirms traditional femininity and reframes it as a source of empowerment rather than limitation. Scholars such as McRobbie (2004, 2009) and Gill (2007) argue that post-feminism emphasizes emotional expressiveness, individuality, and agency within contemporary media culture. However, scholars such as Mills (2003) critique Lakoff's binary framing, arguing that intensifier use varies across contexts, identities, and interpersonal goals. Therefore, Barbie's intensifiers should be viewed not as passive emotional leakage, but as meaningful linguistic resources used to construct affiliative femininity.

Tag Question

Tag questions are short questions added at the end of a statement. They are described as grammatical structures in which a declarative sentence is followed by an attached interrogative clause, or "tag." According to Lakoff (1975), women tend to turn statements into questions to reduce their impact. Tag questions are often used to express uncertainty, seek confirmation, or gain approval from others. These forms can reflect a speaker's desire to be polite, considerate, or less dominant in conversations. Tag questions are commonly used when the speaker is unsure about a topic. Examples include: *don't you?*, *haven't we?*, *did you?*, and *isn't it?*

Data 3 (Scene 00:18:31 – 00:18:35)

Barbie Alexandra: You're malfunctioning.

Barbie Margot: What? No, I'm just, I'm... Am I?

The data above is taken from the conversation between Barbie Margot and Barbie Alexandra. This scene takes place at the beach in Barbie Land, where Barbie Margot begins to physically and emotionally malfunction. After days of feeling strange, thinking about death, having bad breath, taking a cold shower, and falling off her roof, she suddenly topples to the sand while trying to walk. She discovered she was no longer on tiptoes; she just got flat feet. The Barbies around her, including Alexandra and Emma, rush to help and express concern. Barbie Alexandra bluntly tells her she's "malfunctioning," which surprises Barbie Margot. She instinctively denies it by saying, "No, I'm just..." but suddenly pauses and questions herself, asking, "Am I?"

Tag questions are often used by women not only to confirm information but also to reduce the directness of a statement. In this case, Barbie first rejects the idea that she is malfunctioning by saying, "No, I'm just..." but then she hesitates and ends her sentence with "Am I?" This short question shows her uncertainty. It highlights her confusion and inner conflict, suggesting that something deeper is changing within her, though she doesn't yet fully understand it. Rather than firmly denying the claim, she opens herself to the possibility that it might be true. The rising intonation in "Am I?" also invites others in the conversation to either reassure her or agree, which aligns with Lakoff's (1975) idea that women often use language to seek confirmation and maintain connection. This reflects a common pattern in women's speech, where tag questions soften a statement and create space for the listener to respond. It also reflects Barbie Margot's emotional state—she is unsure of herself and begins to question her own identity. This aligns with Amalia's (2022) findings, which showed that tag questions were among the most frequent linguistic features used by female characters in film to express uncertainty or seek support. This is further supported by Rizki et al. (2022), who found that female characters frequently use tag questions to express uncertainty or to seek affirmation, reflecting broader patterns in women's language use.

Although Lakoff (1975) associated tag questions with women's uncertainty, contemporary feminist linguists argue that tags also serve multifunctional purposes, including facilitation, politeness, and involvement (Holmes, 2013). Instead of reflecting powerlessness, tag questions can reflect a collaborative conversational style aligned with women's socialization

toward relational communication. In this sense, Barbie's use of "Am I?" functions not only to express vulnerability but also to create space for interaction and relational support. Coates (2015) similarly argues that such usage promotes solidarity rather than signaling weakness. McRobbie (2009) and Gill (2007) note that modern femininity often negotiates the tension between traditional forms of self-doubt and newer expressions of reflexive self-awareness. Barbie's tag question reflects this negotiation, performing both emotional openness and emerging agency. At the same time, Cameron (1992) cautions that Lakoff's framework risks reinforcing stereotypes by labeling certain linguistic features as inherently 'female.' Therefore, Barbie's tag questions should be understood not merely as markers of insecurity but as strategic linguistic resources for negotiating identity and relationality.

Emphatic Stress

Lakoff (1975) defines emphatic stress as the deliberate emphasis on particular words to highlight their importance in a speaker's statement. Women tend to use this linguistic feature to express intensity, emphasize emotions, or convey urgency. It happens when a woman wants to make a stronger statement. Safitri (2017) further notes that "women generally have a tendency to emphasize certain part[s] of their utterances to help them convey the specific meaning of their utterances" (p. 5). Nevertheless, when women use emphatic stress, they are free to select whichever word in the sentence they wish to stress, and this is usually done by increasing the pitch range.

Data 4 (Scene 01:13:49 – 01:14:50)

*Gloria: It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are **SO** beautiful and **SO** smart, and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough. Like we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong. You're supposed to be **THIN** but not **TOO THIN**, and you can never say you want to be **THIN**, you have to say you want to be **HEALTHY**, but you also have to **BE** thin. You have to **HAVE** money, but you can't **ASK** for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to **LEAD**, but you can't squash other people's ideas. You're supposed to **LOVE** being a mother but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman, but also **ALWAYS** be looking out for other people. You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is **INSANE**, but if you point that out, then you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to be pretty*

*for men but not SO pretty that you **TEMPT** them too much or threaten other women because you're supposed to be part of the sisterhood but always **STAND OUT** and **ALWAYS** be grateful. But never forget that the system is rigged, so **FIND** a way to acknowledge that but **ALSO** always be grateful. You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too **HARD**, it's too contradictory and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you. And it turns out, in fact, that not only are you doing it all wrong, but also **EVERYTHING** is your fault. I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us. And if all of that is also true for a doll just representing a woman, then I don't even know!*

This scene unfolds at a turning point in the movie. Barbie Margot, having internalized the contradicting pressures and overwhelming expectations imposed on women, begins to emotionally break down. Seeing Barbie's despair, Gloria, who has experienced the same struggles in the real world, delivers this intense monologue. Gloria says all her opinions about how social expectations are unrealistic and contradictory.

Gloria's speech is a profound example of emphatic stress, where emotional intensity is embedded in nearly every line through strong pitch, repetition, and vocal emphasis. In this case, Gloria uses emphatic stress heavily in her monologue; it is evident that she voices her frustration with social expectations for women that she considers unrealistic and contradictory. She emphasizes some key words to highlight the pressure and double standards women face, making her speech feel more urgent and emotionally powerful. Notably, the dialogue bursts with stressed content words such as **THIN, SO, TOO, INSANE**, and others, delivered with rising pitch and strong emotion to show how unrealistic these expectations can be. Two other examples of strong emphasis in her speech are the underlined and italicized words *kills* and *doll*. This use of emphasis aligns with Jefferson notation, where capitalized text signifies increased volume or heightened intensity, and underlined words indicate deliberate stress. In this monologue, Gloria uses stress or emphasis as a rhetorical tool to underline the absurdity and contradiction in how women are expected to behave. This aligns with Safitri's (2017) claim that women often emphasize certain parts of their speech to convey their meaning clearly. This supports how Gloria uses stress to help her message stand out. Additionally, Oktapiani et al. (2017) observed that female characters employ emphatic stress to assert themselves and express intense feelings.

Furthermore, reconsidering emphatic stress through contemporary linguistic and feminist scholarship reveals a shift from interpreting it as mere emotional excess to recognizing it as a deliberate rhetorical strategy. Although emphatic stress has historically been associated with heightened emotionality in women's speech, recent studies show that emphasizing particular words can signal agency, stance, and communicative intention (Coates, 2015; Holmes, 2013). Gloria's emphatic delivery intensifies her critique, demonstrating assertiveness and rhetorical control rather than uncontrolled emotion. Feminist and post-feminist theorists further note that expressive linguistic features can function as forms of resistance to gendered expectations; McRobbie (2009) and Gill (2007) argue that emotional expressiveness within post-feminist media often reframes feeling as a mode of empowerment. Cameron (1992) likewise contends that women's so-called "expressive" speech should not be dismissed as overly emotional but understood as a legitimate communicative strategy. Accordingly, emphatic stress in Barbie (2023) operates as a complex linguistic resource that conveys conviction, emotional depth, and social critique rather than conforming to stereotypical depictions of feminine emotionality.

Rising Intonation on Declarative

Lakoff (1975) argues that rising intonation in the declarative form is used to answer a typical yes-no question, as well as to be hesitant. People employ rising intonation to confirm or ask a question. Women may use uptalk when they feel uncertain, wish to sound less assertive and more polite, or when asking for confirmation. As cited in Murti (2018), Lakoff suggests that women use hedges when they hesitate to offer a statement of fact. Therefore, by adapting the sound to the rising tone, they appear to offer their response.

Data 5 (Scene 00:21:39 – 00:21:44)

Weird Barbie: There's the girl and the doll. And never the twain shall cross.

Barbie Margot: The twain is crossing?

Weird Barbie: Yes.

The data above is taken from the conversation between Barbie Margot and Weird Barbie. Weird Barbie discusses the separation between the human world and Barbie Land, leading Barbie to question the merging of the two.

Barbie's inquiry, "The twain is crossing?↑" uses rising intonation to express confusion and to seek confirmation. Barbie's literal interpretation, expressed with a rising tone, signals uncertainty. The declarative tone mimics a question, inviting clarification. As per Lakoff (1975), this exemplifies a woman using uptalk when navigating unfamiliar or abstract territory, reinforcing its function of expressing uncertainty and requesting confirmation. Barbie's intonation here underscores her difficulty in grasping the concept of the two worlds intersecting. The use of uptalk here also invites further explanation from Weird Barbie, signaling her lack of clarity on the matter. Coates (2004) reinforces this idea by highlighting that women often use rising intonation when confronting unfamiliar or unexpected circumstances, as a way of opening up space for additional information. This aligns with Syarifudin and Gunawan's (2022) study, which found that women often use rising intonation to express confusion in unusual or extraordinary situations. Similarly, Talbot (2010) argues that rising intonation in women's speech can also function as a softening device, making their uncertainty less confrontational and more collaborative.

Recent studies also show that rising intonation can help speakers seek clarity, show openness, invite confirmation, or encourage co-construction of meaning, rather than indicate doubt or weakness (Warren, 2016). Barbie's rising tone expresses confusion but also encourages explanation to maintain interaction and seek clarity, aligning with women's socially conditioned tendency toward cooperative discourse (Coates, 2015). Moreover, feminist linguists argue that uptalk often supports cooperation and understanding in conversation (Mills, 2003). This means that rising intonation should be viewed as a communication strategy rather than solely a sign of insecurity. From a post-feminist perspective, rising intonation can also be interpreted as a linguistic space where uncertainty coexists with agency, reflecting complex negotiations of identity in moments of confusion or cognitive challenge.

Avoidance of Strong Swear Words

Women use harsh or swear words less than men, in line with society's assumption that women should be gentle and graceful, not rude. When women are angry, they tend to control their emotions and think about what they want to say. They do not want to hurt the interlocutor and maintain their image. Instead of saying shit or damn, they prefer to use words like "oh dear, goodness, and oh fudge. Generally, when someone uses these expressions, they are experiencing an intense feeling toward an object, person, or thing.

Data 6 (Scene 00:29:03 – 00:29:16)

Barbie Margot: Geez, you would think a construction site at lunchtime would be the perfect place for a little woman power, but this one was so... male.

Ken Ryan: Everything is almost like... reversed here.

The data above is taken from the conversation between Barbie Margot and Ken Ryan. In this scene, Barbie and Ken are in the real world, where she observes the gendered atmosphere of a construction site.

Barbie Margot used the word 'Geez' to avoid strong swear words. Her expressive exclamation reflects frustration or discomfort but is a softened substitute for stronger expressions like Jesus or damn. The use of the word 'Geez' itself is to soften the actual word so as not to sound too harsh to the interlocutor. This aligns with the linguistic feature of women avoiding swear words, even when they feel alienated or disturbed. 'Geez' allows Barbie to express disapproval in a socially acceptable way, demonstrating internalized gender norms around proper female speech. It showcases Barbie's reluctance to use harsh language despite her evident discomfort. Lakoff (1975) also explained that women are not meant to speak harshly and that they avoid swearing because it is considered unladylike. She also noted that women often opt for euphemisms to avoid sounding aggressive or vulgar. This is further supported by Lubis and Bahri (2020), who state that the function of avoiding swear words is to show a strong expression of the speaker's opinion, by using more subtle swearing and/or not using harsh words at all. It reinforces Barbie's ladylike persona and aligns with societal expectations that women should speak politely and moderate their emotional expressions, especially in moments of stress or discomfort. Those are seen as taboo in a specific culture and bring negative impacts. In society, women and children cannot swear as freely as men (Oktapiani et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Lakoff's (1975) claim that women avoid strong swear words has been widely debated, with later feminist scholars arguing that swearing is shaped more by context, identity performance, and social norms than by biological sex (Mills, 2003; Cameron, 1992). While Barbie's substitution of strong swear words with milder alternatives aligns with traditionally feminine politeness norms, this linguistic choice can also reflect cultural expectations rather than personal insecurity. Holmes (2013) notes that avoiding harsh expletives can function as a strategy for maintaining social harmony and projecting politeness. In feminist discourse, such choices illustrate the tension between conforming to normative feminine speech and resisting linguistic stereotypes. Therefore, post-feminist perspectives

argue that women's avoidance or adoption of strong language can be strategic, highlighting how femininity is actively performed and negotiated rather than biologically predetermined.

Super Polite Forms

Lakoff (1975) emphasizes three super polite forms: avoiding swear words, extensive use of euphemisms (when a word becomes associated with anything unpleasant or embarrassing, individuals may seek euphemisms to avoid the discomfort), and using more particles in a request sentence. Some examples of euphemisms include saying passed away instead of died and put to sleep instead of euthanize. Alongside euphemisms, women employ modals such as should, could, would, and might when making requests and giving orders to sound less direct and more polite.

Data 7 (Scene 00:49:34 – 00:49:46)

1950 Woman: I always find I think best at kitchen tables. Tea?
Barbie Margot: Uh, yes, please.

The data above is taken from the scene when Barbie is offered tea by an old woman in the 1950s setting. She responds to the offer of tea with a polite, yet casual, affirmative. This moment demonstrates Barbie's responsiveness to social norms, reflecting her adherence to polite conventions in unfamiliar settings.

Barbie's response, "Uh, yes, please," employs super-polite forms, particularly in the request, which is softened by the word "please." Here, "please" turns a simple affirmation into a more gracious request, aligning with cultural expectations of politeness. This type of politeness is often used in situations where individuals are trying to avoid appearing demanding or rude, especially when interacting with someone of higher perceived status. According to Lakoff (1975), as cited by Agustia (2023), women are not considered disrespectful because they are skilled at using euphemisms, which are associated with positive expression, wisdom, and the appropriate way to speak to others. In this case, Barbie Margot shows respect for the older woman in the 1950s setting by using polite language. Therefore, Barbie points out that she knows the appropriate language to use with her interlocutor. Aini (2016) reinforces this idea by highlighting that women are supposed to maintain "lady-like" behavior, unlike men, and are generally considered more polite than their male counterparts in speech.

Although Lakoff (1975) linked women's use of polite forms to societal

subordination, modern feminists argue that politeness is a social practice that expresses alignment, respect, and relational competence (Mills, 2003). Barbie's use of "please" reflects learned politeness norms but also demonstrates her ability to maintain social harmony through linguistic choices. From a feminist perspective, super polite forms reveal how cultural expectations of gentleness and refinement shape femininity, yet post-feminist theorists note that politeness can also be a form of agency—allowing women to navigate power dynamics strategically (Cameron, 1992). Thus, Barbie's politeness cannot be reduced to weakness; it reflects the ongoing negotiation between traditional expectations of feminine politeness and contemporary notions of empowered femininity.

Empty Adjective

Adjectives are words used to describe something or someone. They often appear immediately before the noun they modify. According to Lakoff (1975), empty adjectives express approval based on personal emotions rather than indicating a general reaction. Instead of providing specific facts, women tend to use empty adjectives to convey their emotional responses. Lakoff points out that many adjectives used to express admiration or approbation are strongly associated with feminine speech. Words such as great, terrific, cool, and neat are considered neutral, while adorable, charming, sweet, and lovely are often seen as feminine-only. Nevertheless, women can use both types, but men typically do not.

Data 8 (Scene 01:32:45 – 01:32:53)

Barbie Margot: Ken. Are you okay?

Ken Ryan: Yeah. Totally.

Barbie Margot: "It's okay if you're crying. You know, I cried too. It's actually kind of amazing."

The data above is taken from the conversation between Barbie Margot and Ken Ryan. This moment occurs during Barbie's emotional reconciliation with Ken after the climax of their journey. Barbie comforts Ken as he expresses vulnerability, affirming the value of emotional expression.

The adjective "amazing" is categorized by Lakoff (1975) as an empty adjective—a term conveying admiration without providing specific content or rationale. Its function here is affective rather than descriptive. Barbie is not analyzing the act of crying logically, but rather expressing an

emotional connection. The modifier ‘kind of’ further softens the certainty of the statement, increasing its intimacy and empathy. Thus, the empty adjective aligns with Lakoff’s (1975) assertion that women tend to use language that emphasizes emotional expression and interpersonal connection.

Comparably, modern feminist linguists argue that evaluative adjectives play a key role in expressing affect, solidarity, and emotional alignment (Holmes, 2013; Coates, 2015). Barbie’s use of “amazing” fosters empathy and relational closeness, reflecting women’s tendency toward rapport-oriented communication, rather than being linguistically “empty,” such adjectives index affective stance and interpersonal warmth—qualities central to many women’s communicative styles. However, Cameron (1992) cautions that labeling such adjectives as inherently feminine reinforces stereotypes. A post-feminist reading recognizes that while these words historically align with femininity, they also empower characters to construct emotional connections and articulate nuanced experiences. Today, such adjectives are recognized as meaningful tools for expressing feelings and strengthening relationships.

Hypercorrect Grammar

According to Lakoff (1975), women tend to use hypercorrect grammar to conform to linguistic norms and avoid appearing unrefined or impolite. This feature includes the use of complete grammatical structures, correct verb forms, and standard pronunciation, avoiding slang or contractions like *goin’* for *going*. Men tend to drop the *g*’s, whereas women pronounce the phoneme /*g*/ in gerund forms to adopt the more prestigious standard variety of English. Therefore, women are more socially conditioned to speak with precision and correctness as a form of politeness and self-discipline.

Data 9 (Scene 00:27:57 – 00:28:03)

Barbie Margot: What’s going on?

Beach Dude: Give us a smile, blondie.

Barbie Margot: Why are these men looking at me?

Barbie walks through Venice Beach in the real world and starts feeling objectified for the first time. She is confused and disoriented by the male gaze and unwanted attention.

Barbie again employs grammatically complete sentences: “What’s going on?” and “Why are these men looking at me?” These utterances use proper subject-verb agreement, correct auxiliaries, and standard verb forms.

The use of "going" instead of the relaxed "goin'," as discussed by Lakoff (1975), reinforces Barbie's tendency toward hypercorrect grammar. Women often use standard language more than men. Even in moments of distress and vulnerability, Barbie maintains correct language use, highlighting her polished and socially conditioned speech. Her grammatical precision not only emphasizes composure but also reflects the societal expectation that women should remain "proper" even in emotionally charged or confusing situations. This aligns with Coates (2004), who notes that women are more likely to adhere to standard language forms to maintain social respectability. Similarly, Trudgill (2000) stated that women are more conscious of linguistic norms than men. It makes women choose not to speak out of linguistic norms. Furthermore, Xia (2013) states that women pay more attention to syntactic accuracy. When expressing her thoughts, she would clarify her speech by using proper grammar.

However, recent feminist linguists argue that hypercorrect grammar should not be viewed only as a sign of women's desire to appear "proper," but also as a strategic choice linked to social awareness and identity work (Holmes, 2013; Mills, 2003). Using standard grammar can signal professionalism, credibility, and politeness, especially in situations where women feel observed or judged. Cameron (1992) also notes that labeling hypercorrect speech as a uniquely feminine feature risks reinforcing stereotypes about how women "should" speak. Instead, a post-feminist perspective views Barbie's precise grammar as a way of navigating unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations while maintaining control and clarity. This shows that hypercorrect grammar functions not only as a reflection of social expectations but also as a resource women use to manage impression, maintain dignity, and assert linguistic competence.

In summary, the analysis of the linguistic features used by the female characters in Barbie (2023) reveals a consistent pattern of speech associated with traditionally feminine language. While Lakoff's (1975) framework provided an initial lens for identifying and categorizing these features, the findings also show that these forms of speech do more than reflect uncertainty or politeness. Across the data, the characters used these features to express emotion, build connection, seek clarity, maintain cooperation, and navigate social expectations, functions supported by more recent feminist linguistic research. Overall, the linguistic findings contribute to broader discussions in feminist linguistics by illustrating how women's language features function in contemporary media: not as stereotypes, but as flexible resources for expressing identity and navigating social relationships.

Analysis of Visual Structure through Interactional Semiotic Function

The second objective of this paper was to examine how interactive meanings were constructed in relevant scenes from the Barbie (2023) film, using the Visual Grammar framework postulated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The analysis explored the relationship between represented and interactive participants. It focused on the visual semiotic choices used to represent the main female characters and how these choices shaped viewer engagement and gender representation.

On contact, the analysis revealed that the majority of the selected figures employed offers (e.g., Figures 1, 3, 4, and 6), in which the characters' gaze was directed away from the viewer. According to Royce, the presence or absence of visual techniques determines the speech function of a particular visual. The direction of a participant's gaze has potential meaning regardless of whether direct eye contact is established. In this film, the frequent use of offers positions the viewer as an onlooker, fostering a sense of detachment from the events being represented. This further situates the participants as objects of observation among "invisible onlookers" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), highlighting how the film favors storytelling over direct audience interaction. However, Figures 2 and 5 depict demand acts, in which Barbie gazes directly at the audience. These rare moments establish an imaginary relationship (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), inviting emotional involvement.

Regarding attitude or perspective, most figures employed a frontal horizontal angle to position the viewer within the characters' world. This angle created a sense of presence and emotional involvement, as seen in Figures 2, 4, 5, and 6. The vertical angle, on the other hand, influenced the viewer's perceived relationship to power. For example, Figure 1 used a low angle to depict Giant Barbie, thereby elevating her symbolic importance and creating a sense of awe. Meanwhile, Figures 2, 4, 5, and 6 employed eye-level shots, which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), promote a feeling of equality and identification between the viewer and the character. Conversely, Figure 3 employed a high vertical angle, portraying Barbie in a passive or observed state, contributing to a sense of the viewer's detachment and dominance (Yao & Zhuo, 2018, p. 127).

In terms of social distance, the film strategically modulated viewer affinity through varying shot types. Long shots, such as in Figures 1 and 3, established impersonal social distance, positioning Barbie within a larger environment and signaling a more observational stance. Close-up and medium close-up shots, seen in Figures 2 and 5, created greater intimacy,

allowing the viewer to perceive emotional nuances and form a more personal connection. According to Hall (1966, as cited in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), such framing suggests social proximity akin to that between friends or family. Medium shots, used in Figures 4 and 6, struck a balance, providing moderate engagement suitable for everyday social interaction.

As for modality, visual realism varied across settings. Figures 1, 3, 4, and 6, which were set in Barbie Land, reflected low modality, characterized by highly saturated colors, less contextual detail, and an overall stylized appearance. This artificial aesthetic reinforced the dreamlike, fantastical tone of Barbie Land, distancing the viewer from any real-world identification. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that modality is influenced by elements such as color saturation, illumination, and background detail, all of which in Barbie Land leaned toward abstraction and idealization. By contrast, Figures 2 and 5, which were set in the real world or moments of personal emotion, showed high modality, marked by muted tones, more detailed contexts, and higher representational realism. These figures encouraged greater viewer involvement by presenting more believable settings and emotional authenticity.

Below is the tabular presentation of the visual grammar analysis of the Barbie (2023) film based on interactional semiotic functions.

Table 2
Interactional Analysis in the Selected Figures

| FIGURES | CONTACT | ATTITUDE | SOCIAL DISTANCE | MODALITY |
|---------|---------|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Offer | Frontal, horizontal angle; low vertical angle | Long shot; impersonal | Medium modality on color and representation |
| 2 | Demand | Frontal, horizontal angle; eye-level | Medium close-up shot; close | Medium modality on color and representation (confident smile) |
| 3 | Offer | Frontal, horizontal angle; high vertical angle | Long shot; far personal distance | Low modality on stylized color and contextualization |
| 4 | Offer | Frontal, horizontal angle; eye-level | Medium shot; personal | Low modality on stylized color and representation |
| 5 | Demand | Frontal, horizontal angle; eye-level | Close-up shot; intimate | High modality on representation (tears, expression) and color |
| 6 | Offer | Frontal, horizontal angle; eye-level | Medium shot; personal | High modality on representation (gentle expression) and color |

Analysis of Scene 1: Giant Barbie (1950s Barbie Arrival Scene)

This scene powerfully introduces Giant Barbie (Margot Robbie) as a transformative figure, disrupting the status quo (playing dolls) in the children present (Gerwig, 2023).



Figure 1. Giant Barbie towering over the children in the opening desert sequence.

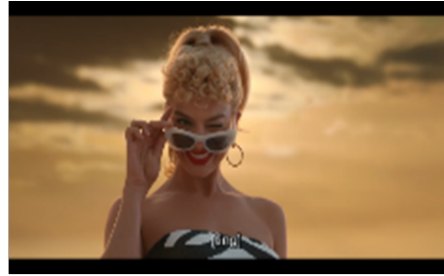


Figure 2. Giant Barbie winking directly at the viewer during her introduction

The scene begins with showing Giant Barbie in a 1950s black-and-white striped swimsuit, towering over small children in a desert-like setting (Figure 1). The background features a hazy orange-brown sky and stylized rock formations. In terms of contact, the figure employs an offer act, with Barbie's gaze directed slightly to the side, avoiding direct eye contact. As explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), an absent gaze constitutes an offer act, presenting the participant for contemplation rather than interaction. This detachment positions the viewer as a passive onlooker. Similarly, Wang (2023) notes that offers are often used in films to portray imaginary or mysterious worlds. The social distance created by the framing is impersonal, reinforcing Barbie's symbolic scale and emphasizing her dominance (Hall, 1966, as cited in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Meanwhile, the low vertical angle elevates Barbie's presence, suggesting power and control over the scene (He, 2024). Despite this sense of distance, the frontal horizontal angle allows some involvement, aligning the viewer directly with her entrance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 134).

The scene transitions as Barbie winks and smiles directly at the viewer (Figure 2), shifting from an offer to a demand act. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state, a demand act occurs when the represented participant gazes directly at the audience, thereby establishing an imaginary relationship with the audience. Halliday (1985) affirms that gaze can invite emotional connection or action. Barbie's confident expression and wink function as a request for attention or alignment (He, 2024), drawing the viewer into her world. The frontal and eye-level angle conveys equality between Barbie and the viewer, removing hierarchical distance (Padilla & Padilla, 2023).

Moreover, the medium close-up reduces social distance, making Barbie appear approachable and emotionally accessible. This framing aligns with Padilla & Padilla (2023) and He (2024), who argue that such shots create intimacy and suggest relationships similar to those between friends or family.

In terms of modality, the scene achieves a medium modality. While the concept of a giant Barbie is fantastical, the realistic human features and muted desert palette lend some grounding in reality. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), modality is shaped by elements such as color saturation, detail, and contextual realism. The dusty orange and golden tones evoke a stylized natural environment, while Barbie's figure is rendered with high fidelity. This blend of realism and fantasy creates a balanced visual style that enhances the scene's symbolic yet believable tone.

Analysis of Scene 2: Barbie Wakes Up in Her Pink Dream House

This scene depicts Barbie's idealized morning routine in her pink dream house. The scene employs a range of figures to establish the artificial perfection and stylized beauty of Barbie Land (Gerwig, 2023).



Figure 3. Barbie sleeping peacefully inside her stylized pink dream house.



Figure 4. Barbie standing at her rooftop as she prepares to begin her day in Barbie Land

The scene opens with Barbie (Margot Robbie) sleeping peacefully in a perfectly arranged pink bedroom (Figure 3). The architecture and furniture are stylized, resembling plastic toys. Her closed eyes indicate an absent gaze, constituting an offer act (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 116), positioning the viewer as an observer rather than a participant. Barbie is presented for contemplation, with no direct interaction. The long shot creates social distance, allowing the viewer to see her clearly along with parts of her environment, while still maintaining formality. The frontal horizontal angle connects the viewer with Barbie's world, creating a sense of involvement. However, the high vertical angle suggests detachment and oversight, implying that the viewer looks down on her and potentially framing Barbie as passive in this context (Yao & Zhuo, 2018, p. 127).

The scene concludes with Barbie standing in a doorway or on a

rooftop, about to exit her dream house (Figure 4). Here, a medium shot, frontal angle, and eye-level vertical angle are used. Barbie's forward gaze is again an offer act (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 116), as she does not engage the viewer directly. The medium shot allows for a closer social distance, while the eye-level angle creates a sense of equality between viewer and participant (Hu & Luo, 2016, p. 160; Yao & Zhuo, 2018, p. 127).

In terms of modality, this scene conveys low modality, evident in bright, saturated colors and stylized settings. The dominance of vibrant pinks and geometric designs creates a toy-like, artificial look. While Barbie appears realistic, her environment stands in stark contrast, emphasizing the fantastical nature of Barbie land. The visual style does not aim for realism but instead embraces an idealized, dreamlike world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Analysis of Scene 3: Barbie Cries for the First Time – Discovery of Emotion

This scene portrays Barbie (Margot Robbie) crying for the first time, capturing a deeply emotional and transformative moment. It marks a significant turning point in her journey, as she begins to confront complex human feelings she has never experienced before. (Gerwig, 2023).



Figure 5. Barbie shedding her first tear while gazing directly at the viewer.



Figure 6. Barbie speaking gently to an elderly woman at the bus stop.

The scene opens with a close-up of Barbie's teary-eyed face (Figure 5). A single tear rolls down her cheek as she gazes directly at the viewer with a surprised and vulnerable expression. Her pink outfit, white hat, and patterned scarf stand out against a softly blurred green-and-white background. In terms of contact, Barbie's direct gaze constitutes a demand act (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 116), forming an imaginary relationship with the audience. According to He (2024), a participant who looks directly at the viewer becomes a "requester," and Barbie's teary expression invites empathy. The close-up framing creates an intimate social distance, emphasizing emotional proximity (Hu & Luo, 2016, p. 160). This aligns with He (2024), who notes that the closer the camera, the closer the social relationship, and with Padilla

& Padilla (2023), who explain that medium-close shots often imply intimacy, friendship, or familial connection. The eye-level angle suggests equality, reinforcing the universality of her emotional experience (Yao & Zhuo, 2018, p. 127), while the frontal angle enhances viewer involvement (Kress & vanLeeuwen, 2006, p. 134).

The scene shifts to a medium shot of Barbie at a bus stop beside an elderly woman (Figure 6), maintaining a frontal, eye-level perspective. Barbie turns slightly to compliment the woman, initiating a subtle moment of connection. Here, the gaze shifts away from the viewer and becomes interpersonal—an offer act directed at the woman (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The medium shot and frontal angle maintain closeness and viewer involvement (Hu & Luo, 2016; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

As for modality, these figures reflect high modality. Barbie's human features, expressive emotions, and the realistic environment, complete with visible texture and natural lighting, contribute to believability. Although Barbie wears vibrant pink, the colors remain within realistic saturation levels. The recognizable outdoor setting, combined with genuine human expressions, shifts the visual tone from fantasy to grounded emotional realism (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), aligning with the film's movement toward authenticity and self-awareness. Furthermore, according to Wang (2023), simplified backgrounds can enhance the focus on the represented participants. In normal situations, the background is always less detailed than the symbols it represents. In this case, the realistic outdoor setting emphasizes Barbie's figure. Padilla & Padilla (2023) reinforce this idea by stating that an interpretation of why the backgrounds were unmodulated could be to emphasize the image's salient parts. So, the viewers' attention was drawn to the people shown rather than to the things around them.

In summary, the visual analysis shows that Barbie (2023) predominantly employs offer images, eye-level angles, and moderate social distance in Figures 1–6. The film's predominant use of offer images, frontal angles, eye-level shots, and moderate social distance positions the female characters as emotionally expressive and visually relatable, reinforcing a femininity that appears gentle, approachable, and reflective. These features act as semiotic cues shaping how audiences perceive characters and their social roles (Forceville, 2020; Machin & Mayr, 2012). For media literacy and feminist pedagogy, this offers a clear example of how visual grammar participates in the cultural production of gendered identities, encouraging viewers to examine how aesthetics shape the meanings attached to femininity in contemporary film.

Conclusion

In brief, this study examined how the *Barbie* (2023) film constructs female identity through both linguistic and visual means. In a time when the media shape public understandings of gender roles, films like *Barbie* contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse on women's representation. In response to stereotypical portrayals of femininity, *Barbie* (2023) reimagines the female experience through a feminist lens.

Linguistically, the high frequency of lexical hedges and intensifiers reflects emotional expressivity and social awareness, features often associated with traditional femininity. Nevertheless, in the film, these features function as tools for relational agency rather than subordination. Visually, the predominance of offer images, consistent eye-level angles, and close-to-medium-close shots position viewers as reflective observers, fostering emotional connection and emphasizing the characters' subjectivity rather than their objectification. The film shifts representation away from the historically male-dominated gaze toward a more egalitarian framing that foregrounds women's perspectives and emotional interiority. Modality shifts from the stylized vibrancy of Barbie Land to the muted realism of the Real World further highlight the film's negotiation between idealized femininity and authentic womanhood.

These findings suggest that the film is an effective resource for understanding gender as a social and cultural construct, as various semiotic resources interact and integrate to convey the discourse's ideological stance. The potential meaning of multimodal texts, such as this film, is strengthened when relationships between viewers and represented characters are established—achieved when audiences are invited to reflect on characters' emotional and social realities through linguistic expression and visual semiotic choices.

In the broader sense, the findings offer practical value for media literacy education and feminist pedagogy by showing how films shape gender ideologies through both language and visual design. They can help educators teach students to analyze how representation, power, and identity are constructed, and guide film studies learners in examining multimodal resources as ideological tools. These insights also promote critical viewing, enabling audiences to recognize how media either reinforces or challenges dominant gender norms.

While the film promotes empowerment, it still operates within commercial, aesthetic, and narrative constraints. The exaggerated femininity of Barbie Land, the polished emotional tone, and the stylized visuals can be

read as both a critique and reinforcement of beauty-centered femininity. Some feminist scholars argue that post-feminist texts risk commodifying empowerment, turning it into a marketable aesthetic rather than a structural critique. These tensions reveal that the film's feminist message is negotiated rather than absolute—an important insight into its multimodal construction of identity.

Furthermore, these multimodal patterns contribute to broader debates in feminist theory and post-feminist media studies by illustrating a negotiated portrayal of women who neither fully conform to traditional gender norms nor entirely reject them. Instead, the film constructs femininity as emotionally expressive, self-reflective, and relational, while still operating within familiar aesthetic conventions. This ambivalence aligns with post-feminist interpretations that view empowerment and traditional femininity as coexisting in contemporary media.

Overall, the study shows that the film's linguistic and visual features work together to shape how femininity, emotion, and gender roles are portrayed. These multimodal patterns offer practical tools for media literacy, feminist pedagogy, and film analysis by helping viewers recognize how gendered meanings are constructed. At the same time, the film's feminist message remains ambivalent, promoting empowerment while relying on polished, commercial, and traditionally feminine aesthetics. This tension reveals that the film both challenges and reinforces familiar ideas about women, reflecting the complexities of contemporary gender representation.

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A Gender Pragmatic Analysis of Compliment Responses among BS in Tourism Management Students in Visayas State University

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Abstract

Research on compliments and compliment responses (CRs) has largely focused on cross-cultural perspectives. However, few studies have examined gender differences in CRs in the Philippine context, particularly in the Visayas region. Thus, this study aimed to identify the compliment response strategies employed by BS in Tourism Management students at Visayas State University, to determine gender-based differences across specific contexts, and to analyze the influence of genderlect on these CRs. Data were gathered using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) adapted from Mascuñana, Patron, Caturay, and Duran (2019), and the responses were analyzed using Holmes' (1986, 1988, 1993) CRs strategy framework, while Tannen's (1990) genderlect theory guided the interpretation of gender norms. Findings revealed that Tourism students most frequently employed the 'Accept' strategy, followed by 'Evade', while 'Reject' was the least preferred, indicating differences at the micro-level. Additionally, gender-based analysis showed that female participants predominantly used 'Accept' strategies across topics such as appearance, character, ability, and possession, whereas male participants favored 'Evade' strategies. These differences somewhat align with Tannen's genderlect theory, which suggests that female speakers tend to engage in 'rapport talk' by expressing agreement and emotional connection. In contrast, males tend to engage in 'report talk,' using conversation primarily to convey information and assert status when interacting with peers (friends or classmates). This suggests that male and female conversational styles may vary depending on the interaction's function, context, and social dynamics. This study provides insights into gendered communication patterns that tourism educators and professionals can use to enhance students' soft skills in responding to compliments. It also contributes to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of gendered

communication, fostering effective interpersonal interactions in diverse social contexts, particularly during compliment exchanges.

Keywords: Compliment Responses (CRs), Compliment Responses Strategies, Gender

Introduction

A person's language is heavily influenced by one's culture, norms, and social roles. When individuals communicate, they must consider the appropriate language for the context, which serves different functions and purposes, such as building connections or sharing information with others. One way that this manifests in real-life settings is compliments. Compliment as an expressive speech act refers to the speaker's positive evaluation of someone's appearance, actions, or qualities. It is a common feature of everyday conversation. It can serve as a phatic expression (a conversational opener) to establish or strengthen social connections, particularly between individuals of equal or higher social status (Tang & Zhang, 2009; Slavianova, 2011).

When someone receives a compliment, they are generally expected to respond, a phenomenon known as a compliment response (CR). Although compliments are typically recognized as positive affective speech acts, they can sometimes function as face-threatening acts (FTAs) in certain cultural contexts (Holmes, 1988). Hence, to avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding, compliment responses (CRs) are "worth studying because, like all speech acts, they can show us the rules of language use in a speech community" (Yuan, 2001, p. 273). The study of CRs has garnered attention in pragmatics due to its role in reflecting social norms, politeness, and cultural values. In the Philippines, where complex cultural dynamics shape language and social interactions, CRs reflect societal expectations of politeness and respect. Studies by Mojica (2002) and Morales (2012) have examined CR strategies among Filipino speakers, finding that Filipino respondents often employ modesty and humility in their responses, aligning with Filipino cultural values. However, despite these insights, there remains limited research specifically examining how gender differences influence CR strategies within the Visayas (Mojica, 2002; Morales, 2012; Albis, 2016) and within specific fields, such as tourism.

English, spoken as the second language in the Philippines, is used across various sectors, including education, government, business, and tourism. Tourism plays a vital role in the country's economy, cultural

exchange, and community development. Tourism students, as future service providers, must develop strong communication skills, cultural awareness, and customer service competence to interact effectively with international and domestic visitors (Suyunovna, 2023). According to Giannotti (2019), hospitality professionals must also go beyond basic politeness and demonstrate emotional intelligence to build genuine connections with guests. Thus, students must learn to handle interactions thoughtfully, including giving and responding to compliments appropriately, to deliver high-quality service.

This study aimed to fill a gap by identifying the compliment response strategies employed by BS in Tourism Management students at Visayas State University, determining gender-based differences in CRs across specific contexts, and examining the influence of genderlect on the use of these responses. By concentrating on this group, this study contributed to a deeper understanding of CRs' use in the Philippine setting, particularly within professional and academic environments where interpersonal communication skills are crucial. Data collection was conducted through written Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to examine CRs in specific contexts or scenarios. Holmes's (1986, 1988, 1993) framework of CRs strategies was used to analyze these responses, while Tannen's (1990) theory of genderlect was applied to test whether gender norms influence these strategies. This approach provides a structured framework for understanding how Filipino tourism students manage face, maintain social harmony, and navigate politeness in gender-specific ways in certain contexts.

Review of Literature

The following review presents the theoretical framework utilized in this study. Searle's (1979) categorization of compliment responses as expressive illocutionary speech acts served as the study's linguistic foundation; Holmes' (1986, 1988, 1993) CRs strategy framework provided a categorization of compliment responses; and Tannen's (1990) genderlect theory guided the interpretation of gender norms.

Compliments and Speech Acts

The study of compliments began in the late 1970s and early 1980s when researchers in linguistics and pragmatics concentrated more on speech act behaviors, including those associated with apologies, requests, recommendations, compliments, and compliment responses (Bibi & Sartini,

2023). According to Holmes (1998), compliment is "a speech act, which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.), which the speaker and hearer positively value" (p. 446). Moreover, when someone receives a compliment, a response referred to as a compliment response (CR) is typically expected. A CR is the expression used by the recipient in reaction to the praise they receive, depending on the social relationship between the individuals (Xu & Zhang, 2024). Through compliments, individuals maintain social relations and promote solidarity. Hence, the main function of both acts is that they are frequently used as speech acts in everyday language (Bibi & Sartini, 2023), and they play an important role as positive politeness strategies to create solidarity between speakers (Holmes, 1988). However, while compliments serve to maintain interpersonal relationships, conflicts in responses may arise when people do not understand each other's speech conventions, leading to misunderstandings of each other's socio-linguistic communication (Tang & Zhang, 2009), as such, understanding how language functions, particularly this kind of speech acts, in social contexts is essential to avoid miscommunication that could impact individual social relationships.

Speech acts, a concept introduced by Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin (1962) in "How to Do Things with Words" and further developed by American philosopher John Searle, refer to how words are used not only to present information but also to perform actions (Nordquist, 2020). Austin's (1962) classification of speech acts was thoroughly examined and greatly improved by his student John Searle. In Searle's book *Expression and Meaning* (1979), Searle proposed five taxonomies of illocutionary acts, namely, representatives or assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. From this category, expressives are speech acts that convey the speaker's psychological state, such as emotions, attitudes, and likes and dislikes, toward a particular situation. They have no direction of fit, and the truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed. This means that an expressive act communicates how the speaker feels about something that both the speaker and the listener assume to be true. It serves solely to reveal the speaker's internal psychological state, without aiming to describe or influence the external world. Paradigmatic examples include apologizing, congratulating, thanking, and praising.

Meanwhile, Searle did not explicitly state in his writing that compliments and compliment responses belong to the category of expressives. However, they can be considered expressives based on their alignment with this definition. Prominent scholars who study the said topic,

such as Janet Holmes, build on this concept.

Holmes' CRs Strategies (1986, 1988, 1993)

Janet Holmes (1986), a prominent New Zealand sociolinguist, studied the functions of compliments and compliment responses (CRs) among New Zealand students. According to Holmes, compliments are most commonly analyzed and described in terms of their linguistic patterns, including syntactic and lexical features (e.g., I (INT) LIKE NP; I love that skirt). However, she emphasized that “the most illuminating analysis of compliment responses is undoubtedly semantic or functional” (p. 491),

Table 1

Compliment Response Strategies Based on Holmes' Framework

| Macro-level CRs | Micro-level CRs | Examples from Holmes' Study |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|
| Accept | Appreciation token | “Thanks”; “Thank you”; “Cheers”; “Yes”; “Good”. |
| | Agreeing utterance | “I know”, “I am glad you think so”; “I did realize I did that well”; “Yeah, I really like it.” |
| | Downgrading/ qualifying | “It’s nothing”; “It was no problem”; “I enjoyed doing it; “I hope it was ok”; “I still only use it to call people; “It’s not bad.” |
| | Return compliment | “You’re not too bad yourself”; “Your child was an angel”; “I’m sure you will be great”; “Yours was good too” |
| Reject | Disagreeing utterance | “Nah, I don’t think so”; “I thought I did it badly”; “Nah, it’s nothing special”; “It’s not”; “Don’t say so.” |
| | Question accuracy | “Why?”; “Is it right?”; “Really?” |
| | Challenge sincerity | “Stop lying”; “Don’t lie”; “Don’t joke about it”; You must be kidding”; “Don’t, come on” |
| Evade | Shift credit | “That’s what friends are for”; “You’re polite”; “No worries”; “My pleasure.” |
| | Informative comment | “It wasn’t hard”; “You can get it from [store name]”; “It’s really cheap.” |
| | Request reassurance | “Really?” |

focusing on their meaning and purpose. Based on her research, which centered on the credit-attribution component of compliments and was influenced by Pomerantz’s (1978) categorization of CR strategies, Holmes refined and developed her own framework of compliment response

strategies. She proposed three macro-level CRs strategies, which are Accept, Reject, and Deflect or Evade, with 10 micro-level CRs strategies.

According to her, responses may explicitly or implicitly accept the credit attributed given in a compliment. The first macro-level strategy, Accept, has four subcategories: (1) Appreciation or Agreement token, refers to the most explicit way of expressing acceptance—appreciation token include like “thanks” and “agreement token” is introduced to cover terms like, “mm”, “yes”, “yea”, “right”; (2) Agreeing utterances, are compliments that the addressee directly accept the credit for the positive quality mentioned; (3) Downgrading/qualifying, implicitly accept some of the credit attributed; and (4) Return compliment, implicitly indicates that the recipient agrees with the content and accepts credit for the positive evaluation while returning the compliment to the complimenter (p. 493).

In contrast, the Reject category includes responses that the addressee does not agree with the complimenter. These are divided into three subcategories: (1) Disagreeing utterance, which explicitly disagrees with the compliment; (2) Question accuracy, where the recipient queries the validity of the compliment, implying disagreement; and (3) Challenging sincerity, where the recipient questions the sincerity or intent of the compliment.

The third macro-level strategy, Deflect/Evade, is, according to Holmes, the most interesting category. It involves responses that avoid directly accepting or rejecting the compliment and includes five subcategories, although only three are discussed in this paper, as they are commonly referenced in other studies (Razi, 2013; Mascuñana et al., 2019). These are: (1) Shift credit, where the recipient deflects the compliment by attributing credit elsewhere or by evading acknowledgment of the positive affect expressed by the complimenter; (2) Informative comment, where the recipient acknowledges the context but ignores the positive sentiment expressed in the compliment; and (3) Request reassurance, where the recipient asks the complimenter to confirm or repeat the compliment, implying modesty but risking being perceived as questioning the sincerity of the compliment.

Building on this framework, the data she gathered led her to analyze the study from a different perspective. Employing her framework of CR strategies, she identified how men and women exhibit different patterns in giving and responding to compliments (Holmes, 1988). In relation to this study, Holmes’ (1986) CR strategy framework will be used to analyze the compliment response strategies employed by BS Tourism Management students and to examine whether there are differences in how male and female students respond to compliments across specific contexts.

Genderlect Theory

Deborah Tannen is a prominent sociolinguist known for her contributions to the study of gendered communication. In her book, "You Just Don't Understand" (1990), she states that "male-female conversation is cross-cultural communication." This statement suggests that men and women have distinct conversational styles that often lead to misunderstandings due to the differing cultural norms or "speech communities" they grow up in (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, n.d.). Each gender has its own set of rules and expectations for communication, and these differences create challenges similar to those experienced between individuals from different cultures. Thus, their conversations may result in misunderstandings during interactions. Tannen's cross-cultural approach to gender differences departs from much feminist scholarship, which claims that conversations between men and women reflect men's efforts to dominate women (Griffin et al., n.d., p. 385). Instead, she asserts that male and female conversational styles are equally valid—not inferior or superior, just representing distinct "languages" or genderlects.

The Genderlect theory centers on two communication styles: rapport talk and report talk. In rapport talk, Tannen explains that women tend to prioritize building rapport and fostering relationships to establish connections with others. At the same time, men often use language to assert status, independence, and hierarchy in conversation, a style referred to as "report talk." According to this theory, women are more connected, supportive, and emotionally expressive, while men are more independent, competitive, and focused on sharing information (Erkaya, 2018). These differing communication priorities can lead to misunderstandings, as each gender interprets conversational cues through their cultural lens, unaware that the other may have a fundamentally different approach to dialogue. This concept is central to her exploration of genderlect theory, where she emphasizes that recognizing these cultural differences can lead to better understanding and communication between genders. In relation to this study, the analysis of gender-based differences in CR strategies among male and female BS Tourism Management students will test whether the results align with or support Tannen's genderlect theory, providing insights into how gender influences communication strategies.

Research on compliments and compliment responses had been predominantly explored from cross-cultural perspectives, wherein results of the studies shows that native English speakers most frequently responds with acceptance of the compliment (Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1986; Holmes, 1986),

while speakers of other languages, particularly in East Asian regions such as China, Japan, and Korea tend to use downgrading and rejections more often because their culture place strong value on modesty, group harmony and indirect communication (Chen, 2010). Consequently, empirical research on compliment responses showed gender-based differences (Holmes, 1986; Herbert, 1986; Almallah, 2017; Heidari-Shahreza, Dastjerdi, & Marvi, 2011). According to Holmes (1988), employing ethnographic methods and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, her study revealed that women and men differed in how they exchanged compliments, particularly in their frequency, syntactic structure, topic choice, and responses to them (Ye, 1993). Specifically, topics about appearance are most commonly given and accepted by women, while men are more likely to downplay or intentionally avoid them. In contrast, compliments about possessions were preferred among men, though they were less favored when given by men to women (Kurita, 2024, p. 23). Women compliment each other more on both looks and abilities, aligning with the idea that they view these exchanges as solidarity-driven.

Meanwhile, compliments on appearance are sensitive topics among men, who may interpret them less favorably and sometimes view them as face-threatening acts, similar to compliments on skills, which they perceive as challenges to their self-image. Hence, while females may view compliments as a positive politeness strategy, males may perceive them as a face-threatening act (FTA) or a challenge to their self-image (Kurita, 2024). Similarly, Herbert (1986, 1990), who also used student data, found that women were more likely to exchange compliments, although his research focused more on responses to compliments than on the topics.

In contrast, employing Holmes's CRs strategies framework, Heidari et al. (2011) study revealed that females used Accept responses less frequently and chose Evade and Reject responses more often than males, especially for compliments about possessions. The results also indicate that no universal model of CRs applies, as different genders follow distinct protocols in different complimenting contexts. Moreover, age plays a significant role in responding to compliments (Heidari et al., 2011, p. 166).

In the Philippine context, there are limited studies on compliment speech acts (Mojica, 2002). Using a data collection method similar to that employed by Herbert, Mojica's (2002) study on the structures governing compliments and CRs among Filipino college students supports the finding that Filipino compliments often follow formulaic syntactic patterns. It also highlights how Filipino students commonly use acceptance and non-acceptance strategies, with a tendency toward modesty, aligning with Filipino

values of humility and social cohesion to build rapport. Consequently, Morales (2012) further extended the study to gender distinctions by employing Holmes's (1988, 1993) framework, which was subsequently modified and used in Heidari et al.'s (2011) study. He observed that both male and female high school participants preferred acceptance as a response, though men leaned more toward evasion while women frequently shifted credit. Albis (2016), also using Holmes' framework, further examined gender differences and found that both genders most often complimented men's abilities and women's appearance. Acceptance was the primary response, but women were more likely to evade, supporting the studies by Heidari et al. (2011), which underscores the influence of gender in maintaining social harmony. Lastly, Mascuñana, Patron, Caturay, and Duran's (2019) study, adapted a discourse completion task (DCT) from Tang and Zhang (2009) on four situational topics: appearance, character, ability, and possession and utilizing Holmes' (1988, 1993) framework, found that Filipino ESL students predominantly accepted compliments, often modifying them to avoid self-praise, with females using combination/modification strategies to manage face, while men showed a slightly higher tendency to reject or evade. Across this research, cultural values of modesty, humility, and solidarity consistently emerge, shaping how Filipino speakers navigate compliments and responses in varied contexts, particularly in urban areas such as Manila and within specific institutions. However, there has been little exploration of CRs and the influence of gender across various Filipino regions, especially in the Visayas, which has distinct gender norms and languages that could reveal further diversity in CRs strategies. This gap is especially relevant for BS Tourism students because they will work in a multilingual and multicultural environment where they must pay attention to guests' satisfaction, such as giving and responding to compliments, to provide high-quality hospitality services. Understanding the influence of gender could help them become culturally aware and more adaptable in a professional setting. Studying this could help tourism educators and professionals guide students or future service providers to adapt and respond appropriately to compliments in specific situations. In this way, this prepares them to handle diverse guests in a manner that feels natural and respectful. Thus, this will help them develop and enhance essential soft skills, such as empathy, cultural awareness, and interpersonal communication, all of which are crucial for success in the tourism industry.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using written Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT), a data collection instrument commonly used in pragmatics designed to elicit multiple occurrences of speech act data across a variety of situations (Johnston, Kasper, & Ross, 1998). In this case, it was used to elicit compliment responses (CRs) from participants through specific scenarios requiring responses to compliments. According to Lorenzo-Dus (2001), there are two reasons why DCT is a suitable research tool for this particular kind of study: first, it can create a sound template of the stereotypically perceived requirements for socially appropriate CRs in the groups studied; and second, it enables the researcher to obtain sufficient data in a relatively short period of time (p.111). Although DCT responses do not fully resemble naturally occurring data, the administrative advantages make the DCT a valuable and effective data collection method (Johnston et al., 1998), making it an effective and efficient tool that suits this study. The DCT in this study was adapted from Mascuñana et al. (2019), who in turn adapted it from Tang and Zhang's (2009) DCTs on four situational topics related to complimenting, to elicit compliment responses (CRs) from participants regarding scenarios about appearance, character, ability, and possession. The present study further adapted Mascuñana et al.'s (2019) DCT by adding one more situation (Situation 3) to each of the four situational topics. This adaptation aligned the scenarios with the context of Tourism students, enabling them to better relate to the situations. The additional situations were comprehensively read, assessed, and evaluated by three interrater or validators, ensuring the reliability and validity of the DCT. Notably, the complimenters in the DCT are friends or classmates, which could influence how participants respond to compliments in this study.

Specifically, this study was conducted at Visayas State University (VSU), Baybay City, Leyte, with respondents comprising selected fourth-year Bachelor of Science (BS) in Tourism Management students. These students were chosen because their course prepares them for service roles, where their ability to respond politely and effectively to compliments is an essential soft skill, and the location allowed for efficient data collection. Participants were selected using a non-probability technique, specifically purposive and convenience sampling, in which not all members of the population are included (Pandey & Pandey, 2015) but are selected intentionally and conveniently. In purposive sampling, participants are selected based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the purpose of the study. In this case, all six male students from the population were intentionally included

to ensure complete representation of the male subgroup.

Meanwhile, nine female students were selected through convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study (Kapur, 2018). Although this approach does not cover the entire population and poses a risk of selection bias due to the researcher's judgment, non-probability sampling remains appropriate for exploratory research aimed at generating new ideas that may later be tested systematically (Alvi, 2016). Therefore, the data generated from the selected fourth-year Tourism students, where ethical considerations were strictly observed and protected, serve to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, particularly regarding how males and females respond to compliments.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis results, along with a comprehensive discussion of the findings that addresses the three main objectives of the study. First, it examines compliment responses at both the macro and micro levels. Second, it analyzes gender differences across four situational topics: appearance, character, ability, and possession. Third, it explores the influence of genderlect on responses to compliments.

Analysis of Compliment Responses at the Macro and Micro level

Table 2 presents the overall distribution of CRs among tourism students at the macro and micro level, based on Holmes' CRs strategies framework (1986, 1988, 1993): accept, reject, and evade. The analysis reveals that, at the macro level, students follow the same order of preference in using CR strategies: Accept, Evade, and Reject. A result that aligns with Tang and Zhang (2009), Heidari et al. (2011), and Baş (2021), indicating that students generally prefer 'Accept' the most, followed by 'Evade' and 'Reject' the least. This shows that 50.56% of the students accept the compliments, indicating a general tendency to respond positively to them. This is closely followed by the evade strategy, comprising 47.22%, in which students prefer to downplay or redirect the compliment rather than accept it directly. On the other hand, only a small portion, 2.22%, directly rejects the compliments, reflecting a minimal disagreement or rejection.

Based on this, the analysis shows that the predominant acceptance of compliments aligns with findings among native English speakers, where accepting a compliment is the most common response (Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1986; Holmes, 1986). This specific finding reinforces Pomerantz's (1978, as cited in Morales, 2012) conversational principle, which states that complimentees tend to respond positively, either by agreeing with or accepting compliments from complimenters. It particularly aligns with Conversational Principle 1, which highlights the preference for delivering CRs. Similarly, in the Philippine context, studies by Morales (2012), Albis (2016), and Mascuñana et al. (2019) have shown that Filipino students tend to accept compliments positively and reject them least. This suggests that the findings of this analysis contrast with the typical responses observed in other Asian cultures such as China, Japan, and Korea, where rejection or evasion is more common (Chen, 1993; Daikuhara, 1986). Nevertheless, the narrow margin between evasion (47.22%) and acceptance (50.56%) offers valuable insights into students' tendencies to redirect compliments, suggesting a prevailing sense of modesty. The country's conservative cultural values may influence Filipino students

Table 2

Overall Distribution of CRs among Tourism Students at the Macro and Micro Level^l

| MACRO-LEVEL CRs | MICRO-LEVEL CRs (f) | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE (%) |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Accept | 1. Appreciation Token (A1) | 39 | 21.67% |
| | 2. Agreeing Utterance (A2) | 15 | 8.33% |
| | 3. Qualifying/ Downgrading (A3) | 5 | 2.78% |
| | 4. Return Compliment (A4) | 32 | 17.78% |
| Subtotal | | 91 | 50.56% |
| Reject | 1. Disagreeing utterance (R1) | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Question accuracy(R2) | 2 | 1.11% |
| | 3. Challenge sincerity (R3) | 2 | 1.11% |
| Subtotal | | 4 | 2.22% |
| Evade | 1. Shift credit (E1) | 32 | 17.78% |
| | 2. Informative comment(E2) | 49 | 27.22% |
| | 3. Request reassurance(E3) | 4 | 2.22% |
| Subtotal | | 85 | 47.22% |
| Total | | 180 | 100% |

tendency to downplay compliments or deflect praise, as Mojica (2002) highlighted.

Central to this cultural framework are the Filipino core values of pakikipagkapwa, or kapwa, which emphasize a “shared identity” (Enriquez, 1978, 1994). This concept involves recognizing others as kapwa or fellow human beings, either by getting along with them (pakikisama) and conforming (pakikitungo) to those considered outsiders or by building rapport, understanding, and mutual acceptance (pakikipagpalagayang-loob) with those they are close to or consider as part of their inner group (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Hence, this cultural framework helps explain the tendency to accept praise in a manner that reflects humility and preserves social harmony, supporting Heidari et al.’s (2011) assertion that cultural differences contribute to variation in preferred response strategies.

Consequently, the examination of micro-level CR strategies across macro-level categories of Accept, Reject, and Evade reveals a clear preference among tourism students for more indirect or positive responses. Among the ten micro-level strategies, Informative comment, a subcategory under Evade, emerged as the most frequently used, accounting for 49 instances (27.22%). This suggests that rather than directly accepting or rejecting the compliment, tourism students often choose to elaborate on its context, softening the response while maintaining politeness. This is followed by the use of the Appreciation token, accounting for 39 instances (21.67%), suggesting that students preferred to directly acknowledge or accept compliments. This finding supports Tang and Zhang’s (2009) study, which identifies Appreciation token as one of the most favored micro-level strategies, often used as a phatic expression considered polite and respectful to the complimenter.

In contrast, direct rejection strategies, such as Disagreeing utterances, were entirely absent, highlighting a general avoidance of confrontation or disagreement. Overall, the findings indicate that tourism students favor strategies that promote social harmony and minimize face-threatening acts in compliment exchanges. This confirms Holmes’ (1988) and Xu & Zhang’s (2024) notion that CRs function as phatic expressions and positive politeness strategies aimed at maintaining social relationships and promoting solidarity.

Analysis of Gender Differences across Four Situational Topics: Appearance, Character, Ability, and Possession

Table 3 presents the overall distribution of CRs among male and female tourism students regarding appearance. The responses are categorized into three macro-level strategies: Accept, Reject, and Evade, which encompass a total of ten micro-level CR strategies. The analysis reveals that females

explicitly accept compliments about appearance (77.78%) more often than males (61.11%), supporting the findings of Holmes (1988) and Almallah (2017), which report that females tend to accept compliments regarding appearance more often than males do. As Holmes (1988) emphasizes, women often use compliments to build solidarity, particularly in peer contexts. In this study, the fact that most complimenters were friends or classmates supports the idea that these interactions were not just about appearance, but also about reinforcing social bonds. However, this contradicts the findings of Heidari et al. (2011), who reported that females accepted fewer compliments about their appearance than males did. This discrepancy may be due to cultural or contextual differences in the studies, highlighting the role of social setting and participant relationships in shaping responses to compliments. Moreover, two explicit types of CR strategies were evidently preferred: Appreciation Token and Return Compliment. On the other hand, both groups showed minimal preference for the Reject strategy. This absence may indicate that rejecting compliments is considered socially inappropriate or face-threatening in this context. A finding consistent with Heidari et al. (2011), who reported neither group frequently employed rejection strategies when responding to compliments about appearance. Whereas, in Evade strategies, both genders favored the Informative comment, with males using it more frequently than females. Females, however, uniquely used Shift credit and requested reassurance. Overall, these patterns suggest that female participants are generally inclined to positively acknowledge compliments on appearance, either directly or through strategies that maintain politeness and social harmony. At the same time, males preferred modest, indirect responses.

Table 3

Overall Distribution of CRs among Male and Female Tourism Students on the Topics of Appearance

| Macro-Level CRs | Micro-Level CRs | MALE | | FEMALE | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
| Accept | 1. Appreciation Token (A1) | 4 | 22.22% | 14 | 51.85% |
| | 2. Agreeing Utterance (A2) | 2 | 11.11% | 1 | 3.70% |
| | 3. Qualifying/ Downgrading(A3) | 1 | 5.56% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 4. Return Compliment (A4) | 4 | 22.22% | 6 | 22.22% |
| Subtotal | | 11 | 61.11% | 21 | 77.78% |
| Reject | 1. Disagreeing utterance (R1) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Question accuracy(R2) | 1 | 5.56% | 0 | 0.00% |

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|----|--------|----|--------|
| | 3. Challenge sincerity (R3) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Subtotal | | 1 | 5.56% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Evade | 1. Shift credit(E1) | 0 | 0.00% | 1 | 3.70% |
| | 2. Informative comment(E2) | 6 | 33.33% | 3 | 11.11% |
| | 3. Request reassurance(E3) | 0 | 0.00% | 2 | 7.41% |
| Subtotal | | 6 | 33.33% | 6 | 22.22% |
| Total | | 18 | 100% | 27 | 100% |

Table 4 illustrates the overall distribution of CRs among male and female tourism students regarding character. As shown in the table, both male and female participants predominantly employed Evade strategies when responding to compliments about character, followed by Accept strategies, while neither group used Reject strategies. The analysis reveals a stronger tendency for both groups to evade compliments. The only notable difference is that males show a slightly higher tendency (77.78%) than females (74.04%) at the macro level. The findings are consistent with those of Tang and Zhang (2009) and Chen (1993), who found that both groups were more likely to use Shift credit as a self-praise avoidance strategy at the micro level. This suggests a cultural tendency to redirect praise to others, reflecting humility and self-praise avoidance. Likewise, both groups completely avoided Reject strategies, indicating a shared preference for either accepting the praise with modification or redirecting it to the complimenter, reflecting humility and a desire to avoid self-praise. Females, on the other hand, demonstrated a slightly higher preference for acceptance strategies (25.93%), especially Return compliment (18.52%), while males favored Informative comments (27.78%) under the Evade category. This suggests that relational context, considering the complimenters in this study were primarily peers (friends or classmates), likely influenced the choice of CRs. According to Holmes (1988), compliments among close peers not only express admiration but also function as acts of solidarity. In this light, use of Shift credit and Return compliment strategies, particularly among female participants, suggests an effort to preserve relational harmony through humility and reciprocal praise. This tendency aligns with Morales' (2012) findings that females often prefer implicit CR strategies, such as Shift Credit, while males' preference for Informative comments implies that they are more inclined to provide contextual elaboration when complimented on character. This reinforces Wolfson's (1993), Manes's (1983), and Holmes's (1988) claims that men use compliments as a form of encouragement or evaluative feedback. On the

other hand, the absence of direct rejection of compliments about character may be socially discouraged in this context. Further supporting the idea that such responses may be viewed as face-threatening within close peer interactions, where maintaining politeness and mutual respect is prioritized.

Table 4

Overall Distribution of CRs among Male and Female Tourism Students on the Topics of Character

| Macro-Level CRs | Micro-Level CRs | MALE | | FEMALE | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
| Accept | 1. Appreciation Token (A1) | 1 | 5.56% | 1 | 3.70% |
| | 2. Agreeing Utterance (A2) | 1 | 5.56% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 3. Qualifying/Downgrading(A3) | 0 | 0.00% | 1 | 3.70% |
| | 4. Return Compliment (A4) | 2 | 11.11% | 5 | 18.52% |
| Subtotal | | 4 | 22.22% | 7 | 25.93% |
| Reject | 1. Disagreeing utterance (R1) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Question accuracy(R2) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 3. Challenge sincerity (R3) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Subtotal | | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Evade | 1. Shift credit(E1) | 9 | 50.00% | 16 | 59.26% |
| | 2. Informative comment(E2) | 5 | 27.78% | 4 | 14.81% |
| | 3. Request reassurance(E3) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Subtotal | | 14 | 77.78% | 20 | 74.07% |
| Total | | 18 | 100% | 27 | 100% |

Table 5 presents the overall distribution of CRs among male and female tourism students regarding ability. The findings reveal a significant gender-based difference in how male and female tourism students respond to compliments about ability, with male students using fewer Reject strategies. Females, in particular, show a stronger preference for accepting compliments about ability (77.78%) than males (33.33%), often using appreciation tokens and returning compliments. This tendency aligns with Tang's (2020) study, which reports that women are more inclined to use acceptance-related strategies when responding to compliments on their abilities, often using appreciation tokens and returning compliments, which may serve as phatic expressions to maintain solidarity. Another factor that may influence their responses is their relationship to their complimenter. In the DCT the

complimenter is presented as a friend or a classmate, the females’ acceptance of compliment may reflect an effort to maintain relational harmony and solidarity, again confirming Holmes’ (1995) claim that when women accept compliment from peers it often functions as “positive politeness”, strengthening in-group ties. However, this finding also contradicts Herbert’s (1990) study, which observed that males are more inclined to accept compliments directly, especially those related to possessions or achievements.

In contrast, males demonstrated a greater tendency to use evasion strategies (55.56%) than females (22.22%), often deflecting compliments about their character through informative comments and shifting credit. These results further support the claims of Wolfson (1993), Manes (1983), and Holmes (1988), who argue that men may use compliments as evaluative feedback. As such, when complimented by peers on their abilities, men may shift the focus away from themselves and may perceive the compliment as an evaluation of their worth and performance, thereby avoiding self-praise in this context.

Overall, these patterns suggest that female participants are generally inclined to acknowledge compliments on ability, often using appreciation tokens and returning compliments to maintain politeness and build solidarity (Holmes, 1988). Whereas, males preferred to use evading strategies to minimize self-praise or preserve face through modesty, possibly viewing compliments as a form of evaluative feedback (Wolfson, 1993; Manes, 1993; Holmes, 1988).

Table 5

Overall Distribution of CRs among Male and Female Tourism Students on the Topics of Ability

| Macro-Level CRs | Micro-Level CRs | MALE | | FEMALE | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
| Accept | 1. Appreciation Token (A1) | 1 | 5.56% | 7 | 25.93% |
| | 2. Agreeing Utterance (A2) | 3 | 16.67% | 1 | 3.70% |
| | 3. Qualifying/Downgrading (A3) | 0 | 0.00% | 2 | 7.41% |
| | 4. Return Compliment (A4) | 2 | 11.11% | 11 | 40.74% |
| Subtotal | | 6 | 33.33% | 21 | 77.78% |
| Reject | 1. Disagreeing utterance (R1) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Question accuracy (R2) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 3. Challenge sincerity (R3) | 2 | 11.11% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Subtotal | | 2 | 11.11% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Evade | 1. Shift credit (E1) | 4 | 22.22% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Informative comment (E2) | 6 | 33.33% | 5 | 18.52% |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----|--------|----|--------|
| 3. Request reassurance(E3) | 0 | 0.00% | 1 | 3.70% |
| Subtotal | 10 | 55.56% | 6 | 22.22% |
| Total | 18 | 100% | 27 | 100% |

Table 6 presents the overall distribution of CRs among male and female tourism students regarding possession. As observed in the table, the analysis reveals a significant gender-based difference in how male and female tourism students respond to compliments about possession, including the minimal use of Reject strategies. Specifically, males show a stronger preference for evading compliments about possession (77.78%) than females (33.33%), often deflecting praise using informative comments and shifting credit. This indicates that males use evading strategies to minimize self-praise when responding to such compliments, a finding that contrasts with Heidari et al. (2011), Holmes (1988), and Herbert (1990), who reported in their studies that males are more likely to accept compliments about possessions. Another factor that may influence these responses is the nature of the relationship between the recipient and the complimenter. In the DCT scenarios, the complimenter is portrayed as a friend or a classmate. The male's tendency to evade compliments may reflect a contextual sensitivity to social proximity, perhaps to avoid appearing boastful or overly confident in peer interactions. According to Holmes (1988), men may perceive compliments as face-threatening acts, leading them to deflect or downplay praise. In this context, male participants possibly used evade strategies in responding to compliments about possession to avoid appearing self-centered within their peer group. This finding aligns with Morales' (2012), study which found out that male tend to adopt evade strategies, particularly the implicit strategy such as providing informative comments, to mitigate the impact of compliments. Such behavior implies that male participants in this context downplay compliments to reduce self-praise, hence reflecting a preference for modesty. Conversely, females demonstrated a higher tendency to accept compliments about possession (62.96%) than males (22.22%), often using appreciation tokens and agreeing with utterances. This suggests that female participants are generally inclined to accept and respond positively to compliments as a means of maintaining politeness and solidarity in interpersonal communication. This, again, stands in contrast to previous findings (Herbert,1990; Holmes,1988; Heidari et al., 2011), which suggest that females tend to evade and reject compliments about possessions. On the other hand, the minimal use of reject strategies by both groups suggests that both males and females are generally reluctant to reject compliments

on possessions directly, likely due to the potential social discomfort or perceived impoliteness that such rejections might cause to their complimenter, particularly when the complimenter is a friend or classmate.

Table 6

Overall Distribution of CRs among Female and Male Tourism Students on the Topics of Possession

| Macro-Level CRs | Micro-Level CRs | MALE | | FEMALE | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
| Accept | 1. Appreciation Token (A1) | 1 | 5.56% | 10 | 37.04% |
| | 2. Agreeing Utterance (A2) | 2 | 11.11% | 5 | 18.52% |
| | 3. Qualifying/Downgrading(A3) | 1 | 5.56% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 4. Return Compliment (A4) | 0 | 0.00% | 2 | 7.41% |
| Subtotal | | 4 | 22.22% | 17 | 62.96% |
| Reject | 1. Disagreeing utterance (R1) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Question accuracy(R2) | 0 | 0.00% | 1 | 3.70% |
| | 3. Challenge sincerity (R3) | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Subtotal | | 0 | 0.00% | 1 | 3.70% |
| Evade | 1. Shift credit(E1) | 2 | 11.11% | 0 | 0.00% |
| | 2. Informative comment(E2) | 11 | 61.11% | 9 | 33.33% |
| | 3. Request reassurance(E3) | 1 | 5.56% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Subtotal | | 14 | 77.78% | 9 | 33.33% |
| Total | | 18 | 100% | 27 | 100% |

The last section presents findings on the influence of genderlect on the compliment responses (CRs) of BS in Tourism Management students.

Influence of Genderlect on Compliment Responses (CRs)

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 display the overall distribution of CR strategies across four situational topics: appearance, character, ability, and possession, highlighting gender differences in responding to compliments. As reflected in these tables, both male and female participants follow the same order of preference in using CR strategies, which is Accept, Evade, and Reject, although with variations in frequency. This consistent pattern suggests that, while both groups employ similar strategies, their application varies by

gender.

Specifically, at a macro level, female participants predominantly used Accept strategies across four situational topics, while males favored Evade strategies. On the other hand, both groups used Reject strategies minimally. Notably, neither group used Reject strategies in response to compliments about character. However, males were more likely to reject compliments related to appearance and ability, whereas females were more likely to reject compliments about possessions. These findings suggest that female Tourism students are generally more inclined to accept or agree with compliments regardless of the topic, often through appreciation tokens or return compliments. Such responses serve as phatic expressions, helping maintain social harmony. Female participants used Evade strategies only once, indicating a polite form of reservation in which the compliment is neither fully accepted nor entirely dismissed.

This pattern of response may reflect modesty or uncertainty about the sincerity of the compliment. Nevertheless, given their predominant use of Accept strategies, women are more likely to accept compliments as a way of maintaining politeness and solidarity in interpersonal communication (Holmes, 1995 & 1988; Herbert, 1990; Mills, 2003), especially within their peer groups (friends or classmates). By warmly accepting or returning the compliments, the interaction becomes mutually affirming, fostering connection, rapport, and empathy. These findings support Tannen's (1990) theory of genderlect, which posits that female speakers tend to engage in "rapport talk," emphasizing agreement and emotional connection. The preference for Accept strategies, particularly through expressions of appreciation and return compliments, reflects women's tendency to prioritize supportiveness and relational closeness in conversation. This behavior illustrates their active and mutual engagement in sustaining positive interpersonal relationships.

Conversely, male participants showed a stronger preference for using Evade strategies when responding to compliments across four situational topics, often through informative comments and shifting credit to others. Notably, males were more likely to reject compliments on appearance and ability, possibly because they perceived such compliments as face-threatening. This reflects a discomfort with self-praise and an effort to maintain modesty in these contexts. These findings suggest that male Tourism students are generally inclined to evade compliments by providing elaborate feedback or redirecting praise to the complimenter, as a way to downplay and minimize self-praise while preserving social harmony. This pattern suggests that men may perceive compliments as evaluative acts

(Wolfson, 1993), interpreting them not merely as expressions of kindness or flattery but as judgements of their ability, character, or performance, thereby assessing their worth in relation to others (Holmes, 1988). Hence, males preferred modest, indirect responses to avoid threatening social harmony, thereby reflecting humility and modesty.

This finding supports, to some extent, Tannen's (1990) concept of genderlect, which posits that men tend to engage in "report talk," using conversation primarily to convey information, assert status, and demonstrate independence, particularly in a professional context (such as the workplace). However, there are notable differences between the way men engage in conversation in Tannen's (1990) study and in the current findings. According to Tannen, men typically engage in direct conversation to assert status and establish dominance. In contrast, in this study, although men employ Evade strategies by providing elaborate explanations to minimize self-praise, this interaction represents an indirect response aimed at assessing and protecting their social standing in peer interactions, preserving group harmony rather than asserting authority or strengthening their status.

This suggests that male conversational styles may vary depending on the function of the interaction, the context, and the nature of social relationships with others. Nonetheless, the overall findings align with Tannen's (1990) study on the conversational perspective on language, gender, and communication, particularly the concept of genderlect, which posits that males and females belong to distinct subcultures and communicate in distinct ways, shaped by social norms and gender identity. Thus, the findings highlight how conversational choices between males and females are influenced by the interplay among context, communicative intent, and the social proximity between the speakers and recipients.

Conclusion

The findings align with the study's objective and reveal that both male and female Tourism students follow the same order of preference in using CR strategies, which is Accept, Evade, and Reject, although with variations in specific strategies, frequency, and context. Notably, the narrow margin between acceptance and evade, suggests a prevailing sense of modesty that reflects the country's conservative cultural values and the tendency to accept compliments as a means of maintaining positive politeness and solidarity, as influenced by the Filipino core values of *pakikipagkapwa* or "shared identity". Furthermore, the results highlight gender-based differences in how males and females respond to compliments across four situational topics:

appearance, character, ability, and possession. At the macro level, female participants predominantly used Accept strategies across four situational topics, often through appreciation tokens and return compliments. In contrast, male participants favored Evade strategies, often through informative comments and shifting credit to others. These differences somewhat align with Tannen's theory of genderlect, which suggests that female speakers tend to engage in "rapport talk" by expressing agreement and emotional connection. In contrast, males tend to engage in "report talk," using conversation primarily to convey information and assert status when interacting with their peer groups (friends or classmates). However, there are notable differences between the way men engage in conversation in Tannen's (1990) study and in the current findings. In Tannen's (1990) findings, men typically engage in direct conversation to assert status and establish dominance. In contrast, in this study, men employ Evade strategies as an indirect response to assess and protect their social standing in peer interactions, thereby preserving group harmony rather than asserting authority or strengthening their status. This indicates that male and female conversational styles may vary depending on the function of the interaction, the context, and the nature of social relationships with others. As such, these findings emphasize the importance of identifying disparities in gender-norm communication to prevent misunderstandings and miscommunication arising from culturally constructed roles or stereotypes (Tannen, 1990). For instance, females' predominant acceptance of compliments across all situational contexts should not be interpreted as boastfulness or a lack of femininity, just as males' tendency to avoid compliments should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness, lack of independence, or diminished masculinity. This highlights the importance of gendered conversation styles to minimize misinterpretation.

The result of this study may inform tourism educators and professionals in understanding gendered nuances in communication and in developing a curriculum that enhances students' compliment responses when interacting with diverse guests. Educators can use these patterns to design role-plays and simulations that teach students how to balance modesty with professionalism and warmth, ensuring that compliments are managed and enhance guest satisfaction rather than create awkwardness or misunderstanding. In this way, tourism students or future service workers can become more aware of their own gendered tendencies in responding to compliments and learn to adapt when engaging with international tourists whose expectations of politeness may differ. By integrating these insights into curriculum and training modules, institutions strengthen students' soft

skills such as empathy, cultural sensitivity, and interpersonal communication, all of which are essential in the tourism and hospitality industry. Thus, this study may contribute to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of gendered communication, helping foster effective interpersonal interactions within diverse social contexts, especially in the context of compliment exchanges.

Moreover, future researchers could address the limitations of this study by employing triangulation methods to gather data, such as observations of natural conversations and interviews, to complement DCT data and capture more authentic compliment responses. Combining multiple data sources would provide a fuller, more reliable picture of complement responses, ensuring results are valid, reliable, and realistic. This approach would provide a comprehensive view of how compliments are used in the Philippines, guiding pragmatists and sociolinguists in understanding the use of CRs across different cultures and the influence of gender on these responses, thus offering guidelines and a framework for interpreting such compliment exchanges.

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Resilience Level and Coping Strategies of College Students in Liberal Arts Program at Kachin Theological College and Seminary, Myanmar

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between resilience and coping strategies among first-year students (N=141) enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts Program (CLAP) at Kachin Theological College and Seminary, Myanmar. Convenience sampling was used to select participants. The Adult Resilience Measure (ARM-R) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) instruments were used to assess resilience and coping styles, respectively. Results indicate that the majority of students demonstrated moderate levels of personal resilience and relational resilience. Task-oriented coping emerged as the most commonly used strategy, followed by emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping. Statistical analysis identified a significant positive correlation between resilience (both personal and relational) and task-oriented coping. In contrast, no significant association was found between resilience and emotion- or avoidance-oriented coping. These findings suggest that students with higher resilience tend to engage in proactive problem-solving strategies, underscoring the need for further research on emotional and avoidance coping styles. Based on these findings, the study rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between resilience and coping strategies. The results suggest that students with higher resilience tend to favor proactive problem-solving approaches. However, the lack of a clear association between resilience and emotion- or avoidance-oriented coping warrants further investigation. Future research should explore the specific emotion-oriented coping strategies students employ and how these strategies interact with different levels of resilience in the Myanmar context.

Keywords: resilience, coping strategies, first-year students, Myanmar, higher education

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. Fostering socio-emotional learning, psychological well-being, and resilience is essential in mitigating risks associated with adversity, such as abuse, violence, and poverty. According to the World Health Organization (2025), approximately 14.3% of adolescents (ages 10-19) experience mental health challenges, often linked to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma, educational difficulties, and risky behaviors. Addressing these challenges through actual coping strategies is integral for promoting well-being in young populations. Mental health issues are prevalent among children and adolescents, with global rates increasing to 15%, with 50% showing signs by the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 24. Therefore, child and adolescent mental health has become a global priority (WHO, 2025).

As a key developmental stage, adolescence is where social and emotional habits are consolidated, establishing crucial behavioral trajectories that significantly influence adult mental health outcomes. Sleeping habits, physical exercise, coping mechanisms, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and levels of resilience are among the most essential habits for maintaining mental health. Exposure to violence in its many forms—including sexual violence, bullying, harsh parenting, and socioeconomic hardship—also poses significant risks to adolescent mental well-being. As for the living situations, stigma, exclusion, or the qualified support and services, adolescence, to some, becomes a riskier period, including other equally serious situations like poor living settings, presence of chronic illness or neurological conditions, forced early marriages, and belonging to a minority ethnic group or a discriminated group.

The COVID-19 pandemic also created a significant impact on global mental health issues, as it reshaped lifestyles worldwide with profound implications on mental health and well-being (Santomauro et al., 2021). Aside from the pandemic, armed conflict is another major factor contributing to this health crisis (van Ommeren & Wessells, 2007). Long-standing adversity from conflict affects psychosocial functions, resulting in trauma, poor mental health, chronic health issues, and increased exposure to infectious diseases (Gary & Checchi, 2020). The increase of several pre-existing mental disorders often comes from conflict situations (Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006), as the impact of political unrest on the population can be immediate or long-lasting due to the sense of loss, unsafe, and trauma experienced by survivors (Ghodse & Galea, 2020).

Generally, everyone faces stressful encounters, ranging from unconscious to significantly life-threatening impacts on the body and mind (Vaughn & Roesch, 2003). While coping processes and resilience levels vary across different groups, only coping strategies can help overcome stress. Both cognitive and behavioral efforts can help manage stress (Lazarus, 1993). Crucially, effective coping strategies and resilience-building support are vital for preventing the adverse effects of mental illness and fostering a meaningful life.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is a Southeast Asian nation bordered by China to the north, Laos to the east, Thailand to the southeast, India to the northwest, and Bangladesh to the west. As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Myanmar is the second-largest country in the region after Indonesia and is currently experiencing the world's longest-running civil conflict. The country experienced two military coups, first in 1962, and more recently on February 1, 2021, which destroyed the independence and stability of the people in many sectors. The resulting Civil Disobedience Movements (CDM) led to universities and schools being shut down, subjecting most young people to poor mental health conditions (Anonymous, 2021).

In Myanmar, there is limited data on mental health, with the Global School-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS) as the primary source. In 2016, the data showed 27.2% for depression and 9.4% for suicidal ideation among the ages 13-17, while 0.7% of suicidal ideation was in ages 13-15 (WHO, 2018). In 2021, there was a remarkable increase in suicidal ideation 9.7% among ages 13-15. Mental health has been a neglected issue in Myanmar until now, where it has become a critical issue in an unstable country in terms of political and economic factors, with poverty rising from 16% to 63% as of October 2020. Moreover, the violent crackdown has been continuing around Myanmar since the military coup began on February 1, 2021, one that significantly affects the citizens' mental well-being. A senior UN official has been warned that Myanmar is facing an impending humanitarian crisis.

There is not much known about the state of mental health issues since the rise of the military coup. The study of Saw et al. (2023) mentioned that there are high rates of probable depression (61.39%) and probable anxiety (58.02%) among young people in Burma across the samples after the 2021 military coup. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021) report, nearly half of the Burmese population was under the national poverty line as early as 2022. The World Bank (2021) also observed that the Burmese economy contracted 18% after the military coup.

These reports highlight the collapse of the healthcare system—particularly in the area of mental health— as well as widespread job losses due to nationwide business closures following the coup, all of which have exacerbated mental health challenges among the population of Myanmar.

This study is situated in Myitkyina, the capital city of Kachin State, in northern Myanmar, between India and China, the origin of the Ayer Wadi River, the blood of Myanmar agriculture. The Kachin ethnic group is a major tribe in Kachin State, and many community- and religious-based institutions provide quality education. The Kachin Theological College and Seminary is a religious-based educational institution that focuses on two main programs: the Liberal Arts Program for secular studies and Theological Studies. In the liberal arts program, the students are primarily in early adulthood, ages 18 to 24.

This liberal arts program is an essential degree that prepares students for leadership in society. After graduation, students become well-prepared to lead people in any society and pursue further studies at a more advanced level. The program's vision is "College liberal arts programs for producing dynamic leaders by committing holistic development to serve the world." Its mission is to (a) provide holistic education by building commitment, character, and competency; (b) produce Christian leaders and missionaries who serve the humanities; (c) help the students grow in spirituality and moral integrity; (d) cultivate servants and visionary leaders for society; and (e) equip the students with specific skills needed for public leadership and to develop a deep understanding of not only the cultural context but also social context. Its goals are to (a) solidify the whole person's development of Christian life through teaching; (b) produce Christian leaders who are well-learned in Christianity and liberal education; and (c) give rise to leaders who will faithfully carry out the holistic mission, as occasion necessitates, in one's congregation as well as in the whole society.

Despite the urgent need for mental health support amidst the chaotic situation in Myanmar, and even though a healthy mental well-being is essential for these students to remain productive in their academic goals, there have yet to be any previous studies that focus on the young people of Kachin Youth from community-based educational institutions. Although many studies have focused on the coping strategies and resilience levels of young people worldwide (e.g., Jakobsen et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020), a significant research gap remains regarding this uniquely vulnerable student population.

Therefore, this present study investigates the resilience level and coping strategies of the students in this Kachin college, as it has been

observed that due to the ongoing conflicts and tension, their mental health is at heightened risk. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of young students from religious-based educational institutions in Myanmar who have been affected by recent political changes, with a particular focus on the relationship between their coping strategies and resilience levels.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationship between coping strategies and resilience among first-year students enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts Program (CLAP). A quantitative approach was adopted for data collection and analysis, with a focus on two primary variables: coping strategies and resilience. The objective was to assess whether coping mechanisms are significantly associated with varying degrees of resilience among students.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at Kachin Theological College and Seminary (KTCS) in Nawng Nang, Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, targeting first-year CLAP students. Established in 1932, KTCS has a rich history rooted in early Bible classes initiated by Rev. Dr. Ola Hanson in 1901. Over the years, it expanded its programs, offering diplomas, bachelor's, and master's degrees in theology and liberal arts. Accredited by ATESEA, KTCS continues to enhance theological education and leadership training. The institution remains a significant center for religious and academic learning, fostering spiritual and intellectual growth among its students.

Research Participants

The study's respondents comprised 218 first-year students enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts Program (CLAP). Utilizing Slovin's Formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 141 students was determined. The CLAP offers a four-year bachelor's degree program and a two-year diploma program. Notably, new diploma tracks in Computer Application and Church Music were introduced in the 2023–2024 academic year.

Research Instrument

The study employed self-administered English-language survey questionnaires comprising three sections: demographic information, the Adult Resilience Measure-Revised (ARM-R), and the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS). The demographic section included questions on gender, age, and academic program details. The ARM-R, a validated self-report instrument for assessing social-ecological resilience, comprises 17 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and includes two subscales: Personal resilience (10 items) and Relational resilience (7 items). It has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .82 to .87, and has been widely supported by global research. Developed through the International Resilience Project, the ARM-R has been validated using Exploratory Factor Analysis and has shown robust construct and concurrent validity.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process followed several key steps. First, the researcher obtained permission from the President of Kachin Theological College and Seminary to conduct the study. In accordance with Jager et al. (2017), convenience sampling was used to select participants. Slovin's formula was used to calculate the required sample size, applying a significance level of 0.05. Following this, informed consent was obtained from both participants and the program head. The researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study, the data collection process, and all relevant ethical considerations. It was emphasized that participants' responses would be used solely for research purposes, as outlined in the informed consent form distributed with the questionnaire. Participants were instructed to carefully read each item before responding. They were also reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Finally, upon completion of data collection, all questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and only the validated responses were included in the statistical analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical methods are used for data collection. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to calculate the distribution of respondents' resilience and coping strategies. Inferential

statistical methods were used to determine the relationship between coping strategies and resiliency among BME students using the critical values for Spearman's Rho. The null hypothesis was rejected if the computed Spearman Rho exceeded the tabulated values, and accepted if the result was lower. These statistical tools are standard, so their formulas need not be shown.

Ethical Considerations

The research proposal underwent a thorough evaluation and approval process conducted by the Silliman University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), to align with the SU Ethical Principles and Guidelines in Research pertinent to this study. Three vital ethical principles are integral to this research: Informed consent, Voluntary participation and withdrawal, and Safe and secure data handling. The research results were disseminated in a manner that maintained respondents' anonymity and confidentiality. Permission to use the standardized questionnaires was obtained from the original authors to ensure compliance with intellectual property rights. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential, and all identifying information was anonymized during data processing. The collected data and completed surveys will be securely stored for a minimum of five years following the final publication of the study, as communicated in the informed consent process. After this retention period, all data will be properly disposed of in accordance with established ethical protocols.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Resilience Level in Terms of Personal and Relational Resilience

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of personal resilience levels among respondents, segmented into low, moderate, and high categories. Of the 141 respondents, 17 (12.06%) exhibited low resilience scores (≤ 30), while the majority, 107 (75.89%), fell within the moderate resilience range (31–41). Similarly, another 17 respondents (12.06%) demonstrated high resilience scores (≥ 42). The mean resilience score across all respondents was 36, with a standard deviation of 5. This study investigated the distribution of resilience among first-year students in Myanmar. A noteworthy finding emerged: a substantial portion (75.89%) exhibited moderate resilience (see Table 1). While this indicates a basic level of coping ability, it highlights the need for targeted interventions to strengthen resilience, particularly among

those with lower scores. Aligned research suggests that students encounter challenges during this transition (e.g., language barriers and academic difficulties [Moe, 2021]), which may contribute to the observed moderate scores. Additionally, previous research emphasizes the inherent resilience of Myanmar students shaped by their lived experiences (Gomersall & Floyd, 2023).

Table 1

Level of Personal Resilience of Respondents

| Resilience | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| ≤ 30 (Low) | 17 | 12.06 |
| 31-41 (Moderate) | 107 | 75.89 |
| ≥ 42 (High) | 17 | 12.06 |
| Total | 141 | 100.00 |
| Mean=36: s=5 | | |

Scores within negative 1 to positive 1 SD = Moderate; Below 1 SD = Low; Above 1 SD = High

Table 2 presents respondents' levels of relational resilience, categorized as low, moderate, and high. Of 141 respondents, 19 (13.48%) exhibited low relational resilience (≤ 22), while the majority, 102 (72.34%), fell within the moderate resilience range (23–31). Additionally, 20 respondents (14.18%) demonstrated high relational resilience (≥ 32). The mean relational resilience score for all respondents was 27, with a standard deviation of 4. A noteworthy finding emerges: a significant portion (72.34%) falls within the moderate resilience range (see Table 2). Aligned research suggests that transitioning to a new educational environment can be challenging for Myanmar students (San & Htwe, 2023). Students encounter diverse individuals and navigate unfamiliar social settings, which may contribute to the observed moderate scores. Furthermore, pursuing higher education often involves leaving familiar social circles (Cho, 2018). This shift can make it difficult to build new connections, which may be reflected in the findings.

Table 2*Level of Relational Resilience of Respondents*

| Resilience | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| ≤ 22 (Low) | 19 | 13.48 |
| 23-31 (Moderate) | 102 | 72.34 |
| ≥ 32 (High) | 20 | 14.18 |
| Total | 141 | 100.00 |
| Mean=27: s=4 | | |

Coping Strategies in terms of Task-Oriented, Emotional-Oriented, and Avoidance-Oriented Coping

Table 3 outlines respondents' task-oriented coping strategies, classified as low, moderate, or high. Among the 141 respondents, 14 individuals (9.93%) demonstrated low task-oriented coping (≤ 48), while the majority, constituting 106 respondents (75.18%), fell within the moderate coping range (49–63). Furthermore, 21 respondents (14.89%) exhibited high task-oriented coping (≥ 64). The mean task-oriented coping score for all respondents was 56, with a standard deviation of 7. While the studies by Al-Dubai et al. (2011) in Malaysia and Yikealo and Tareke (2018) in Eritrea cannot definitively explain the findings of the current Myanmar study, they offer a preliminary connection. All three studies observed a notable portion of first-year students exhibiting moderate task-oriented coping (focused on directly addressing challenges). This suggests a potential commonality across diverse contexts, where students initially prioritize tackling academic issues themselves (Yikealo & Tareke, 2018). These students likely prioritize problem-solving approaches such as seeking clarification or utilizing additional resources. This focus on control signifies a sense of agency in managing their academic performance. (Al-Dubai et al., 2011).

Table 3*Task-oriented Coping Strategy of Respondents*

| Resilience | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| ≤ 48 (Low) | 14 | 9.93 |
| 49-63 (Moderate) | 106 | 75.18 |
| ≥ 64 (High) | 21 | 14.89 |
| Total | 141 | 100.00 |
| Mean=56: s=7 | | |

Table 4 presents respondents' emotion-oriented coping strategies, categorized into low, moderate, and high levels. Among the 141 respondents, 15 individuals (10.64%) exhibited low emotion-oriented coping (≤ 41), while the majority, comprising 109 respondents (77.30%), fell within the moderate coping range (42–58). Additionally, 17 respondents (12.06%) demonstrated high emotion-oriented coping (≥ 59). The mean emotion-oriented coping score for all respondents was 50, with a standard deviation of 8. While the prevalence of moderate emotion-oriented coping (77.30%) observed among first-year students in Myanmar requires further investigation within the specific context, studies from other countries offer relevant insights. Research by Cabras and Mondo (2018) in Italy revealed a similar trend, with a significant portion (around 68%) of students exhibiting moderate levels of emotion-oriented coping. This suggests that students in their initial university years might prioritize managing their emotional responses to academic challenges, perhaps because they are in the early stages of developing a broader repertoire of coping skills (Cabras & Mondo, 2018).

Table 4

Emotion-Oriented Coping Strategy of Respondents

| Resilience | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| ≤ 41 (Low) | 15 | 10.64 |
| 42-58(Moderate) | 109 | 77.30 |
| ≥ 59 (High) | 17 | 12.06 |
| Total | 141 | 100.00 |
| Mean=50: s=8 | | |

Table 5 outlines respondents' avoidance-oriented coping strategies, segmented into low, moderate, and high levels. Among the 141 respondents, 23 individuals (16.31%) exhibited low avoidance-oriented coping (≤ 41), while the majority, constituting 103 respondents (73.05%), fell within the moderate coping range (42–60). Additionally, 15 respondents (10.64%) demonstrated high avoidance-oriented coping (≥ 61). The mean avoidance-oriented coping score for all respondents was 51, with a standard deviation of 9. The prevalence of moderate avoidance coping (73.05%) observed among first-year students in the data aligns with research by Boyraz et al. (2019). Their study found a similar trend: a substantial proportion (about 73%) of students exhibited moderate levels of avoidance coping. This suggests that many first-year students might resort to strategies like procrastination or disengagement from academic tasks when faced with challenges (Boyraz et al., 2019).

Table 5*Avoidance-Oriented Coping Strategy of Respondents*

| Extent | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| ≤ 41 (Low) | 23 | 16.31 |
| 42-60(Moderate) | 103 | 73.05 |
| ≥ 61 (High) | 15 | 10.64 |
| Total | 141 | 100.00 |
| Mean=51: s=9 | | |

Table 6 presents the correlation coefficients (Spearman's rho) between resilience and coping strategies among respondents, along with the corresponding p-values. A significant positive correlation exists between personal resilience and task-oriented coping ($r_s = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$). The positive correlation ($r_s = 0.38$) between personal resilience and task-oriented coping observed in the data aligns with Smith et al.'s (2016) findings. Their research highlights a crucial link: Students with higher personal resilience tend to utilize task-oriented coping strategies more (Smith et al., 2016). This connection is significant because Smith et al. (2016) further suggest that task-oriented coping, characterized by actively addressing academic challenges, is associated with more positive psychological outcomes. Students who directly confront academic difficulties by seeking clarification, using resources, or working to overcome obstacles are likely to experience lower levels of stress and negative emotions.

Table 6*Relationship Between Resilience and Coping Strategies*

| Variables | Spearman's rho (rs) | p-value |
|---|---------------------|---------|
| Personal Resilience and Task-oriented Coping | 0.38 | 0.000* |
| Personal Resilience and Emotion-oriented Coping | 0.02 | 0.780 |
| Personal Resilience and Avoidance-oriented Coping | 0.16 | 0.06 |
| Relational Resilience and Task-oriented Coping | 0.24 | 0.005* |
| Relational Resilience and Emotion-oriented Coping | -0.02 | 0.830 |
| Relational Resilience and Avoidance-oriented Coping | 0.15 | 0.080 |

rs = Spearman's rho; * = Significant

However, there is no significant correlation between personal resilience and emotion-oriented coping ($r_s = 0.02$, $p = 0.780$). While previous research suggests a positive correlation between resilience and task-oriented coping (Smith et al., 2016), the data revealed an unexpected finding. There is no significant correlation between personal resilience and students' preference for emotion-oriented coping strategies. This initial observation necessitates further exploration. The multifaceted nature of emotion-oriented coping encompasses diverse strategies (Kariv & Heiman, 2005). While techniques like seeking support or relaxation exercises can be beneficial, others, such as rumination or social isolation, may not directly address academic challenges. Research by Smith et al. (2016) suggests that personal resilience may moderate the relationship. Individuals with high resilience might effectively utilize emotion-oriented strategies alongside task-oriented approaches, creating a balanced coping mechanism. This indirect influence could explain the observed lack of direct correlation.

A moderate positive correlation exists between personal resilience and avoidance-oriented coping, but it is marginally insignificant ($r_s = 0.16$, $p = 0.06$). This finding aligns with previous research by Smith et al. (2016), who reported mixed results regarding avoidance coping. While their study observed a trend in which individuals with lower resilience were more likely to use avoidance strategies, the correlation was not statistically significant. Supervía and Quílez-Robres (2021) suggest that students often prioritize emotional regulation initially, which may explain the weaker association with personal resilience in this study. Students might focus on managing the immediate emotional response to academic challenges through avoidance before actively addressing the root cause.

Similarly, relational resilience is significantly positively correlated with task-oriented coping ($r_s = 0.24$, $p = 0.005$). This study also revealed a significant positive correlation ($r_s = 0.24$, $p = 0.005$) between relational resilience and students' preference for task-oriented coping strategies. Results align with previous research. For instance, Chen (2016) found that students with higher relational resilience, characterized by actively addressing difficulties through task-oriented coping strategies. However, relying solely on the correlation coefficient has limitations. While statistically significant, the value ($r_s = 0.24$) indicates a moderate positive association. This suggests that other factors beyond relational resilience influence students' preference for task-oriented coping.

There is no significant correlation between relational resilience and

emotion-oriented coping ($r_s = -0.02, p = 0.830$), suggesting that relational resilience is not strongly associated with emotion-oriented coping strategies. Smith et al. (2016) observed mixed results regarding the association between resilience and emotion-oriented coping. Individuals with lower resilience tended to avoid avoidance strategies, but the correlation was insignificant. This aligns with the possibility that strong social support networks, characteristic of relational resilience, might not directly negate the use of all emotion-oriented coping. Students might still utilize specific emotion-regulation techniques for initial emotional response management. However, limitations exist. The study focused on personal resilience, a broader construct, and did not differentiate between various emotion-oriented coping strategies (Smith et al., 2016). Future research can explore relational resilience and its connection with targeted emotion-oriented coping. Along with investigating cultural influences within the Myanmar context, it is necessary to have a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, a moderate positive correlation exists between relational resilience and avoidance-oriented coping, but it is marginally insignificant ($r_s = 0.15, p = 0.080$). Results suggest a possible tendency for students with more robust social support networks to engage in avoidance coping to a slightly greater degree. However, the weak correlation ($p > 0.05$) necessitates cautious interpretation (Smith et al., 2016). This finding seems counterintuitive, as relational resilience is often associated with proactive problem-solving. Further research is warranted to examine this specific association in the context of Myanmar, taking into account cultural influences and the specific types of avoidance coping behaviors used by students.

Conclusion

This study investigated the resilience levels and coping strategies employed by first-year students in Myanmar. The findings offer valuable insights for understanding how these students navigate academic challenges.

The findings indicate that most first-year students in Myanmar demonstrated moderate levels of personal and relational resilience, suggesting a foundation for adaptive coping mechanisms; this moderate standing suggests that while they have some capacity to cope, it is being pushed to its limits by heightened crises in Myanmar—such as political instability and economic collapse—combined with the difficulties of adjusting to a new academic and social environment, which studies show can shape the resilience of young people. However, targeted interventions may be necessary to support students with lower resilience levels. The high

prevalence of task-oriented coping strategies suggests a tendency toward problem-solving approaches in academic settings, including completing assignments on time, developing study schedules, coordinating with groupmates on collaborative tasks, and engaging in goal-directed planning to manage academic demands. Research indicates that students frequently employ such problem-focused and task-focused coping strategies as primary mechanisms for addressing the stressors inherent in educational environments, reflecting an adaptive orientation toward actively confronting and resolving academic challenges rather than avoiding them (Varo et al., 2023). Conversely, the prominent reliance on emotion- and avoidance-oriented coping underscores the need to equip students with a broader range of coping strategies to promote psychological well-being.

The positive correlation between personal and relational resilience and task-oriented coping aligns with the notion that students with stronger coping skills are more likely to approach challenges proactively. However, the lack of a significant correlation between resilience and emotion- or avoidance-oriented coping calls for further investigation. Future research could explore the specific emotion-oriented coping strategies students employ and how these strategies interact with personal and relational resilience. Additionally, delving deeper into cultural influences within the Myanmar context is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding. Enhancing coping skills and fostering resilience can help first-year students navigate academic challenges and improve their overall well-being.

Contributions of Authors

The authors independently conceived, designed, analyzed, and revised the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors affirmed that the study had no associated conflicts of interest.

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DEPED MASTER TEACHERS' PROFILE, INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORY PRACTICES, AND PERFORMANCE RATING AMONG MASTER TEACHERS: BASIS FOR A VUCA-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP THEORY

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify significant relationships among the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers (MTs), their instructional supervisory practices regarding Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA), and their RPMS-PPST performance ratings. It sought to craft a VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory grounded on these variables. Specifically, it investigated the socio-demographic profile of MTs (educational attainment and years in the position); the extent of their instructional supervisory practices in relation to VUCA dimensions; their RPMS-PPST performance rating; and the relationships among these variables. The research employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative design and was conducted across the entire Division of Negros Oriental. A total of 108 Master Teachers served as respondents. Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire, administered both in print and online. The findings show that all Master Teachers have completed their master's degree requirements, and nearly half of the respondents are relatively new to the Master Teacher position. The extent of Master Teachers' instructional supervisory practices across all VUCA dimensions was rated very high. The RPMS-PPST performance rating among MTs was generally Very Satisfactory. Statistical analysis revealed no significant relationship between educational attainment and VUCA responsiveness, nor between VUCA practices and RPMS-PPST ratings. However, a significant relationship was found between educational attainment and RPMS-PPST performance, but not between years in service and performance. In light of these findings, the study recommends that MTs adopt Kitane's VUCA-Oriented Leadership Framework (K-VOLT) to help them navigate the challenges of the Philippine education system.

Keywords: VUCA, instructional supervision, Master Teachers, RPMS-PPST, educational attainment, K-VOLT framework

Introduction

Education is significant for development, a key driver across various aspects of life, especially in enhancing a person's economic well-being and overall life satisfaction (McMahon, 2000; Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000). Cognizant of this, the global community places the utmost importance on education. According to UNESCO (2023), there is a need to respond to the different urgent and dramatic challenges in education; thus, Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 (ESD) has been developed as a widely recognized integral element of Agenda 2030, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), and a key enabler of all other SDGs. UNESCO encourages innovative approaches in education by enhancing non-formal education programs through media, networking, and partnerships. Through ESD, learners of all ages are empowered with the knowledge, skills, values, and agency to address interconnected global challenges, helping them make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet.

In the Philippines, this development is reflected in the vision, mission, and core values of the Department of Education (DepEd), which emphasize producing competent learners by nurturing their full potential for nation-building, guided by the Filipino core values (DepEd Mission, Vision, and Core Values). To address this vision, the Master Teachers, as cohorts of the School Principals in DepEd, play a significant role. They carry out instructional supervisory practices characterized by a "professional continuous and cooperative process of assisting teachers" (Vista, 2023). These practices include the provision of technical assistance to Proficient Teachers towards the improvement of their competencies, assistance to the School Principals in class monitoring, coordination with teachers about important information about DepEd's concerns, and the initiation of projects and programs in the pursuit of the curriculum's needs and its delivery (DepEd Teachers Club, 2018).

The practices, as mentioned, entail flexibility and mindfulness in all forms, given the constantly evolving world and changing times, especially with the advent of 21st-century learning skills (Baron et al., 2018). In the educational landscape, for instance, flexible and mindful leadership among instructional supervisors and others is being challenged by the COVID-19

pandemic, which has brought the world to an unprecedented whirlwind of change. Indeed, this has created ripples of effects across all disciplines, thereby affecting all individuals from all walks of life, specifically in the educational landscape of not just the Philippines but also the world at large; thus, changes in education have rapidly adapted to the changing times that have led to the so-called “new normal” (UNICEF, 2023).

Recent Philippine studies have also emphasized the need for responsive instructional leadership in volatile and rapidly changing educational environments. SEAMEO-INNOTECH (2020) highlighted how Filipino school leaders navigate uncertainty through adaptive school-level innovations, particularly during the shift to distance learning. Similarly, PNU COTP (2021) noted that Master Teachers serve as “frontliners of instructional support,” bridging policy changes and classroom realities. Studies by Quijano (2019) and Dizon (2021) further stress the importance of contextualized supervisory practices in addressing complexity and ambiguity within the Philippine public school system. At the ASEAN level, educational leadership frameworks from Singapore and Malaysia echo similar findings, underscoring adaptability, clarity, and collaborative decision-making as necessary competencies for teachers in VUCA contexts.

Additionally, the curriculum changes over time. In fact, under the recent administration, new changes were introduced in line with the ‘MATATAG’ Agenda, inspired by different pedagogies that cater to 21st-century skills. The curriculum will be implemented in phases from August 2024 to August 2028, with 2023 designated as its preparatory year. The program aims to develop competent, job-ready, active, responsible, and patriotic Filipinos. Among the key features of the curriculum are its focus on the “essential elements” from Kindergarten to Grade 10, specifically language, reading and literacy, Mathematics, Makabansa, and Good Manners and Right Conduct. It also introduces Filipino and English in the latter part of Grade 2, Science in Grade 3, and Social Studies in Grade 4, while removing the current subjects, Mother Tongue and Humanities, from the curriculum. This has received 96% approval from 4,843 respondents, including students, teachers, school owners, various government agencies, and private organizations (British Council, 2023).

The new normal in the Philippine educational landscape brought new standards among Teachers and Master Teachers. Since the new normal requires teachers to be more innovative in their delivery, their duties and responsibilities have also transformed in relation to the 19 indicators of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which they must meet. Thus, DepEd has revised its Results-Based Performance Management

System (RPMS) through the “Implementation of the Results-Based Performance Management System-Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) for School Year 2021-2022” (DepEd Memo no. 4, 2022). Building on the standards set for School Year 2021–2022, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued additional guidelines to fully implement the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). As a result, the “Multi-Year Guidelines on the Results-Based Performance Management System–Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers” were developed. These guidelines apply from School Year 2022–2023 to School Year 2024–2025 (DepEd Memorandum No. 8, s. 2023).

With these new standards, teachers are expected to enhance their practices to align with their performance under the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan and in coherence with DepEd’s MATATAG Agenda. Their performance will be assessed through the various phases outlined in the Key Result Areas (KRA). In other words, this is a new way to assess teacher performance in the new normal, since the previous RPMS was designed solely for alternative modalities such as modular distance learning, radio and TV-based instruction, and online classes during the pandemic.

The various changes brought about by evolving curricular needs, shifting interests, and the priorities of different administrations—as exemplified above—are grounded in educational theories that recognize change as a constant. As Fecho (2023) aptly states, “Education is about change.” It is neither inherited from a previous system nor merely a system to be verified. Rather, education involves the continuous transformation of minds, perspectives, values, understandings, and meanings.

In response to ongoing developments, change has become integral to the educational landscape. Within the Department of Education (DepEd) system, various educational theories have been adopted to guide and inform these changes. Among these, several specifically address the dynamics of change itself. Notable examples include E.M. Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Kurt Lewin’s Three-Stage Model, and the Stage Theory of Organizational Change.

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory is a theory developed by E. M. Rogers in 1962 that focuses on the idea that a certain “change” has its own momentum and later diffuses within a specific population, leading people in that area to adopt it. Change, as this theory states, follows a process and does not occur simultaneously within a system.

The second educational theory is the Three-Stage Model by Kurt Lewin. According to Awati (2024), this theory has been widely accepted by organizations worldwide since its creation in the 1940s. It has three phases:

unfreeze, change, refreeze. Combining the key concepts of Rogers and Lewin, the Stage Theory of Organizational Change has emerged. This stage theory holds that changes in an organization pass through a series of stages.

In general, these three theories are among the most popular educational theories of change. Although they came from different fields, the concepts have been adopted in the educational setup since education encompasses other fields. These theories are time-tested and have already been used across different curricular experiences. However, as time goes by, other theories have emerged because change in the educational landscape is inevitable, driven by educational demands. One of these is that of VUCA – the landscape of change.

The term VUCA is an acronym first used in 1987 and is rooted in the concepts presented by Warren Bennis and Bert Nanus (1985). It stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. It was a term used at the US Army War College and applied to conditions following the end of the Cold War and the conflict in Afghanistan. It applies to a wide range of contexts but is sometimes misused, particularly when it undervalues the importance of thorough planning. When used properly, VUCA helps organizations and individuals assess varying levels of risk and develop appropriate mitigation strategies. By applying the VUCA framework, one can gain a clearer understanding of complex situations and identify the vulnerabilities and risks inherent in each context. As such, performance measurement becomes essential in navigating the challenges of a VUCA environment (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Wright & Wigmore, 2022; VUCA-WORLD, 2022; Kok & Van Den Heuvel, 2019; Bourne, 2021).

According to Sarkar (2016), leaders and managers should always employ sound decision-making techniques in the VUCA world. An increase in volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity means the leader should find new ways to orient. A leader should practice responsible leadership to thrive in the VUCA world. The success factors for the VUCA world include sound principles, firmness in speedy responses, a strong collaborative network, innovation, and ethical practices. All these factors align with the responsible leadership style, that is, a combination of transformational, servant-leadership, and authenticity. This is also termed design thinking – a proven way to navigate the VUCA world (Krawchuck, 2018).

In the Department of Education landscape, the VUCA must be considered by Master Teachers in handling different instructional supervisory practices. Different personalities should navigate this world, and, to put it into context, among Master Teachers. According to Johansen and Euchner (2013), in navigating the VUCA world, “readiness” is necessary and requires extensive

on-the-job practice. New skills are also necessary to meet the needs of the VUCA world, which is changing rapidly. Making strategic plans, allocating resources, and identifying different needs must be done in accordance with the demands of the VUCA world (Shafer & Zalewski, 2011).

In light of these considerations, this study aimed to examine the extent to which Master Teachers engage in instructional supervisory practices in the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environment and their performance, as measured by the RPMS-PPST. The goal was to contribute to DepEd's vision of delivering quality education amid evolving educational challenges. Specifically, the study sought to explore: (1) the relationship between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and the extent of their instructional supervisory practices in the context of the VUCA world; (2) the relationship between their socio-demographic profile and RPMS-PPST performance ratings; and (3) the relationship between the extent of their VUCA-responsive instructional practices and their RPMS-PPST performance. Ultimately, the research aspired to serve as a meaningful reference for addressing gaps in supervisory practices and inform the development of a VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory within the DepEd context.

The main objective of the study was to bridge the gap between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers, the extent of their instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA environment, and their performance ratings based on the RPMS-PPST. This was achieved by examining the extent to which Master Teachers implemented VUCA-responsive instructional supervisory practices and by analyzing their socio-demographic characteristics and corresponding RPMS-PPST performance ratings.

More broadly, the study aimed to contribute to the development of a VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory by exploring the relationships among these variables. In line with this objective, the study sought to determine how Master Teachers exercised their roles within the context of the VUCA world. It also aimed to examine their socio-demographic profiles and assess their RPMS-PPST performance ratings.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1. educational attainment; and,
 - 1.2. Number of years in the position as a Master Teacher?
2. What is the extent of instructional supervisory practices of Master Teachers in relation to:

- 2.1. volatility;
 - 2.2. uncertainty;
 - 2.3. complexity; and
 - 2.4. ambiguity?
3. What is the RPMS-PPST level of performance rating among Master Teachers?
 4. Is there a significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their extent of instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA world?
 5. Is there a significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their RPMS-PPST level of performance rating?
 6. Is there a significant relationship between Master Teachers' extent of instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA world and their RPMS-PPST level of performance rating?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested to answer the specific research questions of this study:

Ho 1 There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their extent of instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA world.

Ho 2 There is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their RPMS-PPST level of performance rating.

Ho 3 There is no significant relationship between Master Teachers' extent of instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA world and their RPMS-PPST level of performance rating.

Methodology

Research Design

The research employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Specifically, the study described the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in the VUCA world using a survey questionnaire.

The three variables were correlated to examine the relationships

between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and the extent of instructional supervisory practices they employed in relation to the VUCA world; between the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their RPMS-PPST level of performance rating; and between the RPMS-PPST performance level of Master Teachers in the new normal and the extent of their instructional supervisory practices in the VUCA context. The relationships among these variables were assessed using statistical tools.

Research Environment

The study was conducted across all three Congressional Districts of the Division of Negros Oriental, specifically in Junior High Schools with Master Teacher items. These schools align their Mission, Vision, and Core Values with those of the Department of Education. The Division of Negros Oriental, which falls under the jurisdiction of Region VII – Central Visayas, is headquartered in the Capitol Area, Dumaguete City, and exercises authority over municipalities within the First, Second, and Third Congressional Districts. These jurisdictions follow the legislative boundaries established by the Republic of the Philippines.

While the Division covers municipalities, cities within the Congressional Districts are governed by their respective divisions. In the First Congressional District, this includes the Canlaon City and Guihulngan City Divisions. The Second Congressional District covers the Bais City, Tanjay City, and Dumaguete City Divisions. Meanwhile, the Bayawan City Division falls under the Third Congressional District.

The First Congressional District is located in the province's northern part. It includes municipalities stretching from La Libertad to Manjuyod, where 10 Junior High Schools with Master Teacher items are found. The Second Congressional District, situated in the central part of the province, spans the municipalities from Mabinay to Sibulan and includes 7 Junior High Schools with Master Teacher items. The Third Congressional District lies in the southern part of Negros Oriental. It includes the municipalities from Bacong to Santa Catalina, where another 10 Junior High Schools with Master Teacher items are located.

Overall, the Division of Negros Oriental had 27 Junior High Schools with Master Teacher items across the three Congressional Districts.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents in the study were 108 Master Teachers from various

Junior High Schools in the Division of Negros Oriental who had Master Teacher items. This number represents 78.83% of the total population of 137 Master Teachers. The data were obtained from the Human Resource Department of the Division of Negros Oriental as of March 2024. The table below presents the distribution of Master Teachers per school across the three Congressional Districts:

Table 1

Total Number of Master Teachers in Junior High Schools per Congressional District in the Division of Negros Oriental

| Junior High Schools per Congressional District | | Population (N) |
|--|--|----------------|
| First Congressional District | | 58 |
| 1. | Ayungon National High School | 7 |
| 2. | Demetrio Alviola National High School | 14 |
| 3. | Jimalalud National High School | 13 |
| 4. | La Libertad National High School | 3 |
| 5. | La Libertad Technical-Vocational High School | 1 |
| 6. | Manjuyod National High School | 10 |
| 7. | Owacan Provincial Community High School | 1 |
| 8. | Pacuan National High School | 2 |
| 9. | Tambo National High School | 5 |
| 10. | Tayasan National High School | 2 |
| Second Congressional District | | 41 |
| 1. | Amlan National High School | 2 |
| 2. | Mabinay National High School | 11 |
| 3. | Negros Oriental High School | 21 |
| 4. | Benedicto P. Tirambulo Memorial National High School | 2 |
| 5. | Sibulan National High School | 2 |
| 6. | San Jose Provincial High School | 2 |
| 7. | Tubigon High School | 1 |
| Third Congressional District | | 38 |
| 1. | Dauin National High School | 7 |
| 2. | Don Emilio Macias Memorial National High School | 8 |
| 3. | Jose Marie Locsin Memorial High School | 1 |
| 4. | Casiano Z. Napigkit National High School | 4 |
| 5. | Maria Macahig National High School | 5 |
| 6. | Santiago Delmo National High School | 1 |
| 7. | Siaton National High School | 5 |
| 8. | Sta. Catalina National High School | 3 |
| 9. | Valencia National High School | 3 |
| 10. | Zamboanguita Science High School | 1 |
| Total | | 137 |

Research Instrument

The main source of data was a self-administered, researcher-developed survey questionnaire. It was contextualized in line with the Department of Education's undertakings. The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part asked respondents to provide basic information, including their socio-demographic profile, as aligned with the variables stated in the Statement of the Problem. Master Teachers were also asked to indicate their numerical RPMS-PPST Level of Performance for the School Year 2022–2023. The RPMS-PPST Level of Performance refers to the overall performance rating of a Master Teacher, measured on a 5-point Likert scale and based on the five Key Result Areas (KRAs) and the Plus Factor: (1) Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, (2) Learning Environment and Diversity of Learners, (3) Curriculum and Planning, (4) Assessment and Reporting, (5) Personal Growth and Professional Development, and (6) the Plus Factor. Each Master Teacher's performance is evaluated by the School Principal at the end of every school year, following the schedule set by the Division Office. Division Personnel then verifies these ratings to ensure that the required Means of Verification (MOVs) for each objective under the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) have been submitted. For School Year 2022–2023, MOVs were verified virtually. Each objective was assessed based on the quality, efficiency, and timeliness of the MOVs submitted. To be rated Very Satisfactory, a Master Teacher needed to meet the expected performance criteria. The RPMS-PPST performance ratings were categorized as follows: Outstanding (4.500–5.000), Very Satisfactory (3.500–4.499), Satisfactory (2.500–3.499), Unsatisfactory (1.500–2.499), and Poor (1.000–1.499), in accordance with DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2023 (see Appendix J for the tool).

The second part of the questionnaire measured the extent to which instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers aligned with the VUCA world. Each element of the VUCA acronym (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) was represented by a set of positively stated statements. Master Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they applied specific instructional supervisory practices related to each VUCA element. The statements were formulated based on the roles and functions of Master Teachers as specified in DepEd Memorandum No. 8, s. 2023.

Each item was carefully crafted, reviewed, and aligned with the guidelines provided by Kraaijenbrink (2018) and the VUCA Prime model by Lawrence (2013). The Volatility items focused on how Master Teachers handled rapid, predictable changes by maintaining a clear vision

for curriculum adjustments. Uncertainty items centered on how Master Teachers responded to challenges and unpredictable developments in the teaching-learning process. Complexity items explored how they provided clarity regarding the structures and interconnected elements within the education system. Ambiguity items assessed their agility in preventing misunderstandings with internal and external stakeholders.

The survey used a 4-point Likert scale with the following verbal interpretations: 4 – Strongly Agree, 3 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts: two Master Teachers and one Graduate School Professor with relevant expertise in VUCA and the RPMS-PPST framework, as outlined in DepEd Memorandum No. 8, s. 2023.

To establish reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested on 30 Master Teachers from public elementary schools in the Division of Negros Oriental who were not part of the actual respondent pool. Elementary teachers were deemed valid pilot respondents since both elementary and secondary teachers follow the same RPMS-PPST framework. The pilot test was conducted after securing approval from the Division Office. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, with a required p-value of 0.05 or lower as the margin of error. The resulting reliability coefficients were: Volatility = 0.94, Uncertainty = 0.94, Complexity = 0.92, Ambiguity = 0.95, and Overall = 0.98. These results confirmed that all items were reliable, exceeding the acceptable reliability threshold of 0.85 as recommended by Manarang and Manarang (1972).

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher conducted data collection after ensuring that the survey instrument was valid and reliable and had been formally approved by the panel. The survey questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) of Silliman University on July 23, 2024. A formal request letter was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Negros Oriental, seeking permission to conduct a pilot test among public elementary school teachers and, subsequently, the actual study involving Master Teachers from various Junior High Schools across the three Congressional Districts. The letter included the necessary attachments, including the approval of Master Teachers from each district, indicating their voluntary participation, as well as a series of endorsements from the respective Public School District Supervisors.

Upon receiving approval, the researcher coordinated with various School Principals to identify the respondents using stratified random sampling. The self-reported survey questionnaire was accompanied by an informed consent form that assured participants of the privacy and confidentiality of their responses. Data collection was conducted using a mixed-method approach: both online (via Google Forms) and in print. Due to the limited number of responses received through the online format, the researcher opted to distribute more printed copies. For online distribution, links were sent directly to respondents, while printed copies were delivered to each school and retrieved according to the schedule set by respondents.

A total of 108 Master Teachers from various Junior High Schools under the Division of Negros Oriental completed the survey questionnaire: 28 responded online and 80 via printed copies. This number represents 78.83% of the total population of 137 Master Teachers.

Data Analysis

The statistical tools used in this study were as follows: Cronbach's alpha (α), weighted mean ($w\bar{x}$), standard deviation (s), simple mean (\bar{x}), Chi-square (χ^2), and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (r_s). Since these statistical tools are standardized, their respective formulas are no longer included.

Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to determine the reliability of the indicators for each aspect after pilot testing. This test was considered the most appropriate for survey research, where responses are not simply scored as right or wrong and where each item allows multiple possible responses. The weighted mean ($w\bar{x}$) was used to assess the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in relation to the VUCA world (Statistical Correlation, 2009). Scoring for each aspect was done separately and interpreted using the following tables:

Table 2 presents the interpretation of scores related to Volatility, which reflects the degree to which Master Teachers accept and respond to changes in the teaching and learning process.

Table 2*Explanation Table for the Aspect Volatility*

| Score | Verbal Description | Explanation |
|-------------|--------------------|---|
| 3.25 – 4.00 | Strongly Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in volatility is Very High. Master Teachers always accept different changes in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 2.50 – 3.24 | Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in volatility is High. Master Teachers moderately accept different changes in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 1.75 – 2.49 | Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in volatility is Low. Master Teachers lowly accept different changes in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 1.00 - 1.74 | Strongly Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in volatility is Very Low. Master Teachers do not accept different changes in the teaching-and-learning process. |

Table 3 explains how Master Teachers understand and navigate unpredictable circumstances in the teaching-learning process.

Table 3*Explanation Table for the Aspect Uncertainty*

| Score | Verbal Description | Explanation |
|-------------|--------------------|---|
| 3.25 – 4.00 | Strongly Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in uncertainty is Very High. Master Teachers always understand hardships and unpredictable happenings in the teaching-and-learning processes. |
| 2.50 – 3.24 | Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in uncertainty is High. Master Teachers moderately understand hardships and unpredictable happenings in the teaching-and-learning processes. |
| 1.75 – 2.49 | Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in uncertainty is Low. Master Teachers lowly understand hardships and unpredictable happenings in the teaching-and-learning processes. |
| 1.00 - 1.74 | Strongly Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in uncertainty is Very Low. Master Teachers do not understand hardships and unpredictable happenings in the teaching-and-learning processes. |

Table 4 shows how Master Teachers understand systemic structures and their interconnections within the teaching-learning process.

Table 4

Explanation Table for the Aspect Complexity

Table 4 outlines how Master Teachers demonstrate agility in handling ambiguous situations and in avoiding misunderstandings among stakeholders.

| Score | Verbal Description | Explanation |
|-------------|--------------------|--|
| 3.25 – 4.00 | Strongly Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in complexity is Very High. Master Teachers always understand the different structures involved in a system and their interconnectedness in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 2.50 – 3.24 | Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in complexity is High. Master Teachers moderately understand the different structures involved in a system and their interconnectedness in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 1.75 – 2.49 | Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in complexity is Low. Master Teachers lowly understand the different structures involved in a system and their interconnectedness in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 1.00 - 1.74 | Strongly Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in complexity is Very Low. Master Teachers do not understand the different structures involved in a system and their interconnectedness in the teaching-and-learning process. |

Table 5 outlines how Master Teachers demonstrate agility in handling ambiguous situations and in avoiding misunderstandings among stakeholders.

Table 5
Explanation Table for the Aspect Ambiguity

| Score | Verbal Description | Explanation |
|-------------|--------------------|--|
| 3.25 – 4.00 | Strongly Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in ambiguity is Very High. Master Teachers always possess agility in the internal and external aspects so that misunderstanding can be avoided in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 2.50 – 3.24 | Agree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in ambiguity is High. Master Teachers moderately possess agility in the internal and external aspects so that misunderstanding can be avoided in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 1.75 – 2.49 | Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in ambiguity is Low. Master Teachers possess low agility in the internal and external aspects so that misunderstanding can be avoided in the teaching-and-learning process. |
| 1.00 - 1.74 | Strongly Disagree | The extent of instructional supervisory practices in ambiguity is Very Low. Master Teachers do not possess agility in the internal and external aspects so that misunderstanding can be avoided in the teaching-and-learning process. |

Standard Deviation (s) was used to assess whether responses among research participants were homogeneous. Simple Mean (\bar{x}) was used to determine the RPMS-PPST level of performance rating, based on the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF, 2021). The RPMS-PPST rating scale was interpreted as follows: Outstanding (4.500–5.000); Very Satisfactory (3.500–4.499); Satisfactory (2.500–3.499); Unsatisfactory (1.500–2.499); and Poor (1.000–1.499).

Chi-Square (χ^2) was used to determine the significant relationships addressed in Research Questions 4 and 5, as the data involved categorical variables. Lastly, the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (rs) was used to assess the significance of the relationship for Research Question 6, as the data were ordinal.

Ethical Considerations

After being approved by the panel, the survey questionnaire was reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) of Silliman University and granted ethical clearance on July 23, 2024. A letter was sent

to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Negros Oriental, indicating the researcher's intent to conduct pilot testing among public elementary school teachers and, subsequently, to carry out the actual research with Master Teachers from various Junior High Schools across the Congressional Districts. The letter included the required attachments, including written approval from Master Teachers in each district, indicating their voluntary participation, and a series of endorsements from the respective Public School District Supervisors.

Once approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with the various School Principals to identify respondents through stratified random sampling.

A total of 108 Master Teachers participated in the study. Before data collection, each participant was provided with an informed consent form. They were briefed on the specific data to be collected and the procedures involved in the study. Master Teachers were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. The research did not interfere with any scheduled classes.

Ethical considerations were observed, particularly regarding confidentiality and anonymity, including the respondents' RPMS ratings. Data were securely stored on Google Drive, accessible only to the researcher, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Finally, the researcher ensured that the respondents' welfare was protected from any potential harm. All raw data will be permanently deleted from Google Drive, and all collected data will be disposed of following the approval of the complete dissertation.

Discussion

The study's findings are presented in accordance with the research questions enumerated in the previous sections of the research. The tables were then analyzed and presented descriptively to provide a broader context and deeper understanding of the data.

Socio-Demographic Profile of Master Teachers

The table below shows the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers by educational attainment and years in the position. With 108 respondents, the percentage per response is presented after the frequency.

Table 6*Socio-Demographic Profile of Master Teachers*

| Educational Attainment | <i>f</i> | % |
|--|----------|--------|
| Doctorate Degree (full-fledged) | 10 | 9.26 |
| Doctorate Degree (with units) | 7 | 6.48 |
| Masters' Degree (full-fledged) | 22 | 20.37 |
| Masters' Degree (CAR) | 69 | 63.89 |
| Total | 108 | 100.00 |
| Number of Years as Master Teacher | | |
| 0 to 3 | 47 | 43.52 |
| 4 to 10 | 30 | 27.78 |
| More than 10 | 31 | 28.70 |
| Total | 108 | 100.00 |

Table 6 presents the distribution of the 108 respondents by the highest level of educational attainment and the number of years they have served as Master Teachers. Most Master Teachers (63.89%) have completed their academic requirements for a master's degree, which is one of the basic requirements for being a Master Teacher (Llego, 2019). The remaining percentage corresponds to educational attainment beyond the master's degree, referring to Master Teachers who have either pursued or completed doctoral studies. Specifically, 22 Master Teachers (20.37%) had completed a master's degree, 7 (6.48%) were pursuing a doctorate but had not yet completed one, and 10 (9.26%) had already earned a doctoral degree.

Nearly half of the respondents (43.52%) are relatively new to the Master Teacher position, suggesting they are newly promoted teachers from the Teacher III position. There are 30 (27.78%) Master Teachers who have held the position for 4 to 10 years, and 31 (28.70%) who have held the position for more than a decade.

The data imply that the Department of Education should further investigate the factors behind the low proportion of Master Teachers pursuing doctoral degrees. These factors may include their motivation to pursue higher studies, their current priorities, the availability of opportunities for continued education, or financial considerations. On the other hand, the high number of early-career Master Teachers may indicate rapid turnover or expansion, which could potentially "weaken" the quality of mentorship if not supported by structured onboarding processes, such as pairing new Master Teachers with more experienced ones. In response, schools should

adopt differentiated mentoring and coaching strategies tailored to the length of service of Master Teachers in their current role. The distribution of respondents by educational background and tenure as Master Teachers suggests a diverse range of experiences among participants. This diversity supports the use of Martin Evans's Path-Goal Leadership Theory as the theoretical foundation of the study. In this framework, Master Teachers act as instructional supervisors who support Proficient Teachers in achieving higher performance. They are expected to provide clear goals and objectives aligned with the expectations set for the teachers under their supervision, in accordance with DepEd Memorandum No. 8, s. 2023. Guided by the Path-Goal Leadership Theory, Master Teachers are positioned to identify obstacles encountered by their colleagues and transform these challenges into learning opportunities that promote growth, as measured through the RPMS-PPST (Toole, 2023).

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices of Master Teachers in Relation to Volatility

The table below presents the extent of instructional supervisory practices of Master Teachers in relation to volatility. The 12 statements are arranged in descending order by their weighted mean, based on a sample size of 108. Each statement also includes its corresponding standard deviation. In addition, the table provides the verbal description and interpretation for each item.

Table 7

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices among Master Teachers in Relation to Volatility

| Statements | $w\bar{x}$ | s | VD | I |
|---|------------|------|----|----|
| In doing my duties and responsibilities as a Master Teacher in the new normal, I have... | | | | |
| Exhibited constructive behavior management skills by positive and non-violent discipline. | 3.71 | 0.45 | SA | VH |
| Showed gladness towards the impart of knowledge about the changes in the curricular undertakings. | 3.71 | 0.45 | SA | VH |
| Promoted on the use of critical and creative thinking as 21st century skills. | 3.70 | 0.46 | SA | VH |

| | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Accepted the different unpredictable changes in the teaching-and-learning process. | 3.69 | 0.46 | SA | VH |
| Envisioned how I can provide efficient technical assistance to my colleagues. | 3.69 | 0.47 | SA | VH |
| Considered the different factors brought by change in the decision-making process. | 3.69 | 0.46 | SA | VH |
| Shared the new indicators of the RPMS-PPST among colleagues through collaborative expertise sharing. | 3.69 | 0.47 | SA | VH |
| Became flexible enough on the mandates set by the new standards of the RPMS-PPST. | 3.65 | 0.48 | SA | VH |
| Conducted School Learning Action Cells (SLACs) with my colleagues on the trends of education brought by technological changes. | 3.65 | 0.48 | SA | VH |
| Shared goals on the initiated Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) with my colleagues in the pursuit of the needs and interests of the learners. | 3.60 | 0.51 | SA | VH |
| Modelled in the adaptation of the different teaching pedagogies in different learning modalities. | 3.58 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Crafted some action plans / improvement plans to track the development of the institution. | 3.42 | 0.51 | SA | VH |
| Composite | 3.65 | 0.34 | SA | VH |

Legend: $w\bar{x}$ =Weighted Mean; s=Standard Deviation; VD=Verbal Description; I=Interpretation

Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree/Very Low (SD/VL); 1.75-2.49=Disagree/Low (D/L); 2.50-3.24=Agree/High (A/H); 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High (SA/VH)

Table 7 presents the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in relation to volatility. The data show that Master Teachers strongly agreed they were engaged in various supervisory practices through their visionary skills, particularly in accepting changes in the teaching-and-learning process brought about by educational reforms (Lawrence, 2013), as emphasized by Wright and Wigmore (2022). The composite weighted mean of 3.65 indicates a very high level of instructional supervisory practices in relation to volatility.

All 12 statements under this aspect were rated very high, suggesting

that Master Teachers consistently agreed that they were implementing these practices in the classroom. Among the indicators, two items received the highest weighted mean of 3.71. These referred to the Master Teachers' strong belief in the importance of demonstrating positive discipline and constructive behavior management skills, and in expressing enthusiasm when imparting knowledge about curricular undertakings.

This finding suggests that Master Teachers demonstrate strong adaptability to change, which is an essential element of volatility. When the Department of Education issues new updates or mandates, these teachers appear ready and willing to adopt them immediately. This response aligns with the Stage Theory of Organizational Change by Rogers and Lewin (Glanz et al., 2008), which outlines how organizations and their members become aware of, adapt to, implement, and eventually institutionalize change. In this context, Master Teachers were shown to be highly responsive to change, whether due to new policies, shifts in educational priorities, or administrative transitions.

Further analysis of the descending weighted means reveals that Master Teachers strongly agreed on several key practices. These included promoting critical and creative thinking skills (3.70), accepting unpredictable changes in education (3.69), planning how to provide technical assistance (3.69), considering various factors in decision-making (3.69), sharing new RPMS-PPST indicators with colleagues (3.69), demonstrating flexibility in adapting to new RPMS-PPST standards (3.65), conducting School Learning Action Cells (SLACs) focused on educational trends (3.65), sharing goals related to initiated Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) with peers (3.60), and modeling the use of varied teaching pedagogies across different modalities (3.58). All of these received very high interpretations.

While all indicators were rated very high, the item with the lowest weighted mean was 3.42, which referred to the creation of action or improvement plans to track institutional development. Although this score still falls within the "very high" category, it suggests that Master Teachers may place slightly less emphasis on long-term strategic planning. Nonetheless, this practice remains vital to navigating volatility effectively. The standard deviations, which ranged from 0.45 to 0.51, suggest that the responses were relatively consistent across the sample. This indicates a shared understanding and application of instructional supervisory practices in relation to volatility.

Literature supports these findings. According to Harris and Muijs (2025), instructional supervision can help teachers become more adaptive to volatility. Key supervisory practices — such as consistent, constructive

feedback; promoting collaboration; and supporting teachers in navigating new educational trends — build resilience and responsiveness among teachers. This aligns with the high agreement seen in this study regarding collaborative expertise sharing and technical assistance.

Supporting this, Vescio et al. (2008) emphasized the role of collaborative expertise sharing in achieving both teacher growth and student achievement. In the Department of Education, the Learning Action Cell (LAC) is a formal platform through which Master Teachers provide technical assistance to their colleagues. Through LAC sessions, teachers collaboratively plan, address challenges, and implement projects and programs to improve instructional practice. These collaborative environments enhance content knowledge, pedagogy, assessment strategies, and professional ethics, ultimately contributing to holistic student development in a constantly changing world (DepEd Memo No. 35, 2016).

Given these insights, the Department of Education may consider strengthening Master Teachers' capacity for long-term strategic planning, particularly in crafting action or improvement plans. Volatility-focused training programs could be developed to enhance this area. Additionally, conducting root-cause analyses, such as interviews or focus group discussions with Master Teachers, could help identify reasons behind the relatively lower score in this area. Possible explanations may include time constraints, lack of training, or unclear directives from the Department.

In summary, the findings indicate that Master Teachers demonstrate a very high level of acceptance and responsiveness to change. Their volatility, as reflected in their practices, positions them well to navigate the evolving landscape of education.

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices of Master Teachers in Relation to Uncertainty

The table below shows the extent of Master Teachers' instructionalsupervisory practices in relation to uncertainty. The 12 statements are arranged in descending order of weighted mean based on a sample size of 108. Each statement also includes its corresponding standard deviation, along with the verbal description and interpretation.

Table 8

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices among Master Teachers in Relation to Uncertainty

| Statements | w \bar{x} | s | VD | I |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| In doing my duties and responsibilities as a Master Teacher in the new normal, I have | | | | |
| Worked collaboratively with colleagues to unpack and hit the Most Essential Learning Competencies in each period. | 3.72 | 0.45 | SA | VH |
| Helped my colleagues plan and achieve professional development goals. | 3.66 | 0.48 | SA | VH |
| Understood that there are unpredictable happenings for a certain period in the teaching-and-learning process. | 3.64 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Understood the steps necessary on crafting learning plan/s that was/were shared among colleagues coherent with the attainment of the Department of Education's Mission, Vision, and Core Values. | 3.58 | 0.53 | SA | VH |
| Monitored and evaluated teachers in addressing CIGPs through mentoring and coaching. | 3.58 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Looked at the different ways and options in solving different Concerns, Issues, and Gaps (CIGPs) aroused. | 3.56 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Designed, selected, organized, and used varied assessment strategies to make the teaching-and-learning process easier. | 3.55 | 0.54 | SA | VH |
| Bridged different learning gaps and hardships in addressing learners' differences. | 3.52 | 0.54 | SA | VH |
| Responded fully by studying, understanding, and implementing the indicators in the new normal for the RPMS-PPST. | 3.51 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Modified different learning strategies if those are hard to sieve at first. | 3.50 | 0.52 | SA | VH |
| Oriented teachers about their involvement in the public educational system. | 3.47 | 0.57 | SA | VH |
| Implemented different Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) by following protocols. | 3.39 | 0.53 | SA | VH |
| Composite | 3.56 | 0.37 | SA | VH |

Legend: w \bar{x} =Weighted Mean; s=Standard Deviation; VD=Verbal Description; I=Interpretation

Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree/Very Low (SD/VL); 1.75-2.49=Disagree/Low (D/L); 2.50-3.24=Agree/High (A/H); 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High (SA/VH)

Table 8 presents the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in relation to uncertainty. The results show that Master Teachers strongly agreed they were engaged in various supervisory practices that demonstrate an understanding of hardships and unpredictable events in the teaching-and-learning process (Lawrence, 2013; Wright & Wigmore, 2022). The composite weighted mean of 3.56 indicates a very high level of instructional supervisory practices regarding uncertainty.

All 12 indicators under this aspect received a “very high” interpretation, implying that Master Teachers strongly agreed they were consistently applying these practices. The highest weighted mean (3.72) was assigned to the item on collaborating to unpack the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). This suggests that Master Teachers are dedicating time to help teachers understand the core components of the curriculum, which are competencies that are aligned with the evolving contexts and needs of learners. It also implies that, during uncertain times, Master Teachers prioritize curricular coherence and relevance. This finding is consistent with the Stage Theory of Organizational Change by Rogers and Lewin (Glanz et al., 2008), as it reflects the Master Teachers’ ability to become aware of changes and understand their implications before adapting and implementing them in the classroom.

The results also highlight that Master Teachers collaborate with their peers each quarter to unpack the MELCs. Such collaboration, which focuses on common instructional goals, promotes a cohesive and effective teaching environment, thereby supporting student success. This practice has been especially crucial in times of uncertainty, where adaptability to new demands and instructional approaches is necessary (DuFour et al., 2006; Zepeda, 2013).

Other statements that received very high weighted means include helping colleagues plan and achieve professional development goals (3.66), understanding unpredictable occurrences in the teaching-and-learning process (3.64), and collaborating in crafting learning plans aligned with DepEd’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values (3.58). Also rated very high were mentoring and coaching teachers to address CIGPs (3.58), exploring ways to solve instructional challenges (3.56), and selecting varied assessment strategies (3.55). Other indicators included bridging learning gaps (3.52), implementing RPMS-PPST indicators (3.51), modifying learning strategies

as needed (3.50), and orienting teachers on their roles in the public school system (3.47).

The lowest weighted mean (3.39) pertained to implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) in compliance with protocols. Although still rated very high, this suggests slightly less emphasis on formalized action planning during uncertain times. The complexity of executing PPAs amid disruptions may explain this result. Nevertheless, this practice remains essential to managing uncertainty effectively.

This observation aligns with Hattie (2009), who emphasized the importance of bridging learning gaps, particularly when students experience disruption. It is therefore crucial for Master Teachers to enhance their creativity in designing and implementing PPAs. These initiatives should be grounded in research, requiring Master Teachers to immerse themselves in data gathering and synthesizing relevant findings to improve learning outcomes.

Despite their creativity, Master Teachers must also ensure compliance with established protocols. The data suggest there may be bureaucratic challenges in implementing PPAs, especially when proposed programs fall outside the department's standardized initiatives. Proposals must undergo multiple layers of approval, which may discourage innovation. This may explain the slightly lower rating on this indicator. It reveals a potential tension between the need for innovation during uncertainty and the constraints of bureaucratic compliance.

In this context, the Stage Theory of Organizational Change reinforces the idea that Master Teachers must fully understand the nature of uncertain conditions before initiating change. They must also strike a balance between embracing innovation and adhering to institutional protocols. The Department of Education should examine the root causes of difficulties in complying with such protocols. While Master Teachers exhibit strong collaboration and adaptability, their reduced engagement with formal compliance highlights a need to streamline bureaucratic processes. Additionally, there should be increased support for Master Teacher-initiated PPAs, recognizing their leadership role within the system.

This concern is further supported by the Path-Goal Leadership Theory (Toole, 2023), which underscores the Master Teacher's role as an instructional supervisor. As such, their efforts in guiding Proficient Teachers must be complemented by supportive structures that enable both compliance and innovation.

The standard deviations, ranging from 0.45 to 0.53, indicate a high level of consistency in responses. This suggests that most Master Teachers

share similar practices related to uncertainty.

In summary, the data show that Master Teachers consistently understand and respond to hardships and unpredictable developments in the teaching-and-learning process. Their capacity to lead in times of uncertainty reflects both flexibility and commitment to educational continuity.

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices of Master Teachers in Relation to Complexity

The table below shows the extent of Master Teachers' instructional supervisory practices by complexity. The 12 statements are arranged in descending order of weighted mean based on a 108-sample size. Each statement is accompanied by its corresponding standard deviation, along with the verbal description and interpretation.

Table 9

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices among Master Teachers in Relation to Complexity

| Statements | $w\bar{x}$ | s | VD | I |
|---|------------|------|----|----|
| In doing my duties and responsibilities as a Master Teacher in the new normal, I have | | | | |
| Instilled in my thoughts that in every decision I make, I always look at the cause and its effects and see the interconnectedness of these items. | 3.70 | 0.46 | SA | VH |
| Brought myself outside the school premises even beyond the exigency of my service. | 3.68 | 0.47 | SA | VH |
| Collaborated with my School Principal, colleagues, and other stakeholders in the application of different effective techniques in problem management. | 3.67 | 0.47 | SA | VH |
| Applied effective communication strategies among different key stakeholders (i.e., colleagues, parents and guardians). | 3.62 | 0.49 | SA | VH |
| Performed my duties inside and outside the Community Learning Centers (CLCs). | 3.56 | 0.53 | SA | VH |
| Built a backup system through constant communication with my School Principal, colleagues, and other stakeholders. | 3.56 | 0.52 | SA | VH |
| Determined the pros and cons of the different factors involved in planning and managing an institution. | 3.53 | 0.54 | SA | VH |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Clearly understood the different connections between curricular issues and the factors affecting their occurrence. | 3.48 | 0.52 | SA | VH |
| Made clear and appropriate decisions in the different Concerns, Issues, and Gaps (CIGPs) within my reach. | 3.44 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Developed the capacity to 'sense, shape, and seize' different complexities through thorough understanding. | 3.40 | 0.55 | SA | VH |
| Designed different systems aligned with my own learner-centered teaching philosophy. | 3.40 | 0.55 | SA | VH |
| Used my own learner-centered teaching philosophy towards interconnectedness among different stakeholders. | 3.39 | 0.53 | SA | VH |
| Composite | 3.55 | 0.35 | SA | VH |

Legend: $w\bar{x}$ =Weighted Mean; s=Standard Deviation; VD=Verbal Description; I=Interpretation

Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree/Very Low (SD/VL); 1.75-2.49=Disagree/Low (D/L); 2.50-3.24=Agree/High (A/H); 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High (SA/VH)

Table 9 presents the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in relation to complexity. The results show that Master Teachers strongly agreed that they were engaged in supervisory practices that reflect clarity in understanding the different structures involved in a system and their interconnectedness in the teaching-and-learning process (Lawrence, 2013; Wright & Wigmore, 2022). A composite weighted mean of 3.55 indicates a very high level of instructional supervisory practices in this area.

All 12 indicators under complexity were rated very high, suggesting a strong agreement among Master Teachers that they regularly implement these practices. The highest weighted mean (3.70) was given to the practice of considering cause-and-effect relationships in decision-making and understanding how various factors are interconnected. This supports the idea that Master Teachers apply systems thinking, recognizing patterns, linkages, and the broader impact of their decisions. Senge (1990) and Peschl and Matlon (2021) emphasize that effective decision-making in education requires understanding how different components of the system influence each other and actively involving stakeholders in the process to arrive at more informed and meaningful decisions.

This finding indicates that Master Teachers are highly aware of the complex factors influencing their decisions, whether related to curriculum changes, student needs and interests, or emerging DepEd policies. In line with the Stage Theory of Organizational Change by Rogers and Lewin (Glanz et al., 2008), Master Teachers demonstrate the ability to identify causes and effects, adapt to change appropriately, and work toward institutionalizing improvements in practice.

Further analysis of the descending weighted means shows strong agreement with several other indicators. These include extending services beyond the school community (3.68); collaborating with school heads, colleagues, and stakeholders to address challenges (3.67); applying effective communication strategies (3.62); performing duties inside and outside Community Learning Centers (3.56); maintaining backup systems through regular communication with stakeholders (3.56); analyzing the pros and cons of different planning and management factors (3.53); understanding connections between curricular issues and influencing factors (3.51); making sound decisions in relation to CIGPs (3.48); and developing the capacity to “sense, shape, and seize” complexity through reflective understanding (3.44). All indicators received a very high interpretation.

Communication, in particular, plays a critical role in addressing complexity. As Bryk et al. (2010) noted, effective communication is key to building relationships among internal and external stakeholders, including parents and school leaders. Their study in the Chicago public school system showed that positive relationships within the community contributed to improved student learning. This highlights the importance not only of frequent but also of meaningful and quality communication.

Two statements, however, received the lowest weighted mean (3.40), although still falling under the “very high” interpretation. These pertain to designing systems aligned with learner-centered philosophies and using these to foster stakeholder interconnectedness. The results suggest that Master Teachers may place slightly less emphasis on system design that supports shared responsibility for student success, which is crucial in navigating complexity.

This underscores the need for Master Teachers to ground their decisions in a learner-centered teaching philosophy. Systems thinking must be aligned with such philosophies to better guide responses to emerging situations in the classroom. According to Tomlinson (2001), interconnectedness and inclusivity are essential in addressing the diverse needs of learners, ensuring that instruction remains personalized and responsive.

However, there appears to be a potential misalignment or implementation gap between DepEd's bureaucratic structures and the learner-centered approaches idealized by Master Teachers. While DepEd maintains standardized systems, protocols, and guidelines, these may not always allow for the flexibility required in learner-centered instruction. For instance, when a Master Teacher wants to promote independent learning, they must also consider the pros and cons of proposed activities in consultation with stakeholders. This often results in modifications to their original plans in order to accommodate contextual realities.

To bridge this gap, there is a need for stronger professional development in design thinking approaches that integrate both DepEd systems and learner-centered strategies. Even though Master Teachers engage in structured practices, they must also be equipped to transform these into more flexible, responsive methods aligned with the realities of their learners. This reflects the Stage Theory of Organizational Change, which calls for awareness and balance when navigating complex changes, especially when there is tension between institutional requirements and pedagogical ideals.

In such situations, Master Teachers may prioritize structural compliance over innovation, especially when managing complexity. As instructional supervisors, they must master the ability to integrate both aspects effectively and set an example for Proficient Teachers under their guidance.

The standard deviations, which ranged from 0.46 to 0.55, indicate that most Master Teachers shared similar practices and levels of engagement in addressing complexity.

In summary, the data show that Master Teachers consistently understand the various structures involved in a system and recognize their interconnectedness within the teaching-and-learning process. This level of engagement underscores their essential role in navigating the complexities of educational leadership.

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices of Master Teachers in Relation to Ambiguity

The table below shows the extent of instructional supervisory practices of Master Teachers in relation to ambiguity. The 12 statements are arranged in descending order of the weighted mean rating of 108 respondents. Each statement is also accompanied by its corresponding standard deviation, along with the associated verbal description and interpretation.

Table 10 presents the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in relation to ambiguity. The results show that Master Teachers strongly agreed that they had engaged in supervisory practices that demonstrate agility in dealing with internal and external stakeholders to prevent misunderstandings in the teaching-and-learning process (Lawrence, 2013; Wright & Wigmore, 2022). The composite weighted mean of 3.52 indicates a very high level of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in addressing ambiguity.

Table 10

Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices among Master Teachers in Relation to Ambiguity

| Statements | w \bar{x} | s | VD | I |
|---|-------------|------|----|----|
| In doing my duties and responsibilities as a Master Teacher in the new normal, I have | | | | |
| Integrated literacy and numeracy in teaching across subject areas easily. | 3.74 | 0.46 | SA | VH |
| Set a high level of awareness, creativity, and capabilities of observation. | 3.63 | 0.49 | SA | VH |
| Modelled effective applications of content knowledge and pedagogy within and across curriculum teaching areas. | 3.57 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Prepared myself to be knowledgeable on the ways and means of the public school system. | 3.56 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Reflected on different curricular gaps in the academic endeavor. | 3.56 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Decided appropriately based on exact directions whenever there are unclear situations. | 3.53 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Thought critically in following protocols vis-à-vis misunderstandings happen. | 3.52 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Incorporated ways of planning, facilitating, and enriching teaching practices in different contexts. | 3.52 | 0.50 | SA | VH |
| Identified ways in interpreting a varied situations vis-à-vis institutional Concerns, Issues, and Gaps (CIGPs). | 3.46 | 0.52 | SA | VH |
| Applied different time-tested and modern strategies in planning and management. | 3.46 | 0.52 | SA | VH |
| Solved the internal and external problems in the institution to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. | 3.43 | 0.52 | SA | VH |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Researched as to what are the happenings in the educational system in the Philippines. | 3.22 | 0.54 | SA | VH |
| Composite | 3.52 | 0.36 | SA | VH |

Legend: $w\bar{x}$ =Weighted Mean; s=Standard Deviation; VD=Verbal Description; I=Interpretation

Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree/Very Low (SD/VL); 1.75-2.49=Disagree/Low (D/L); 2.50-3.24=Agree/High (A/H); 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High (SA/VH)

All 12 indicators under ambiguity received a very high interpretation. This suggests that Master Teachers consistently apply these practices within the teaching-and-learning process. Among the statements, the highest weighted mean (3.74) was assigned to the successful integration of literacy and numeracy across different subject areas. This reflects the Master Teachers' ability to model ambiguity management by anchoring teaching in foundational educational skills.

The data reveal that Master Teachers are highly effective in managing ambiguity. Their ability to integrate literacy and numeracy across subjects implies strong problem-solving skills and a capacity for creativity and adaptability. These qualities are essential for leaders in a constantly changing educational environment. As Kezar (2005) and Brookfield (2012) argue, such environments require educators to be critical thinkers, capable of making informed decisions even when clear guidelines are lacking.

This finding also suggests that Master Teachers can translate ambiguous competencies into concrete classroom practices. They maintain instructional focus despite systemic uncertainties, providing clear evidence that they have internalized and institutionalized strategies for navigating ambiguity. This is consistent with the Stage Theory of Organizational Change by Rogers and Lewin (Glanz et al., 2008), which emphasizes awareness of change, implementation, and its sustainability through instructional supervision.

Further analysis of descending weighted means shows that Master Teachers strongly agreed with the following practices: demonstrating awareness, creativity, and observation skills (3.63); modeling the application of content knowledge and pedagogy (3.57); becoming familiar with the public school system (3.56); reflecting on curricular gaps (3.56); making appropriate decisions in unclear situations (3.53); thinking critically while following protocols (3.52); planning and enriching teaching practices across different contexts (3.52); interpreting varied institutional situations (3.46);

applying both traditional and modern strategies in planning and management (3.46); and solving internal and external problems to avoid misunderstanding (3.43). All these were rated very high, indicating consistent application of ambiguity-related leadership.

Although still rated very high, the lowest weighted mean (3.22) was observed for the indicator on researching educational developments in the Philippine context. This suggests that while Master Teachers are generally proactive in ambiguity management, they are somewhat less focused on integrating research into these efforts. However, research remains a vital tool in equipping Master Teachers to navigate ambiguity.

Beyond being creative and critical thinkers, Master Teachers must also stay informed about ongoing developments in the educational system. Research by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) in the United States revealed that teachers actively engaged in research were more capable of adapting to emerging trends and challenges. This finding underscores the importance of research in the professional practice of Master Teachers, especially in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Hambleton (2020) further reinforced this point by noting that educators cope better with ambiguity when they are flexible, reflective, and open to new strategies. The implication is clear: Master Teachers in the Philippines must remain fully aware of national developments to inform evidence-based decisions, respond to new challenges, and contribute meaningfully to the broader pedagogical discourse.

The data therefore suggest a shift in the role of Master Teachers, from local problem-solvers to knowledge creators, and from instructional supervisors to research-informed leaders. To support this shift, the Department of Education should institutionalize teacher-led research initiatives and provide opportunities for Master Teachers to engage in ambiguity-responsive leadership development programs. Such support could enhance their ability to respond effectively to constant change. Through research, Master Teachers gain insights into systemic issues and become better equipped to initiate and sustain change, in line with the Stage Theory of Organizational Change. Awareness of these dynamics lays the groundwork for further transformation.

The standard deviations, which ranged from 0.46 to 0.54, indicate that most Master Teachers share a similar extent of engagement in supervisory practices related to ambiguity.

To summarize, the findings show that Master Teachers demonstrate strong agility and can manage misunderstandings in the teaching-and-learning process. However, their capacity to lead in ambiguity can be further

strengthened through engagement in educational research and professional development grounded in system responsiveness and learner-centered leadership.

Summary of the Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices of Master Teachers in Relation to VUCA

The table below presents the composite mean of the extent of instructional supervisory practices of Master Teachers in relation to Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity, based on a sample size of 108. Each dimension is accompanied by its corresponding standard deviation, verbal description, and interpretation.

Table 11

Summary Table on the Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices among Master Teachers in Relation to the VUCA World

| Aspects | $w\bar{x}$ | s | VD | I |
|-------------|------------|------|----|----|
| Volatility | 3.65 | 0.34 | SA | VH |
| Uncertainty | 3.56 | 0.37 | SA | VH |
| Complexity | 3.55 | 0.35 | SA | VH |
| Ambiguity | 3.52 | 0.36 | SA | VH |
| Overall | 3.57 | 0.33 | SA | VH |

Legend: $w\bar{x}$ =Weighted Mean; s=Standard Deviation; VD=Verbal Description; I=Interpretation

Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree/Very Low (SD/VL); 1.75-2.49=Disagree/Low (D/L); 2.50-3.24=Agree/High (A/H); 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High (SA/VH)

Table 11 presents the summary of the extent of instructional supervisory practices among Master Teachers in relation to Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA). The data indicate that Master Teachers strongly agree that they have been actively engaged in various supervisory practices relevant to the VUCA World. These include those essential for responsible leadership in navigating such an environment (Krawchuck, 2018). The overall composite weighted mean of 3.57 signifies a very high level of instructional supervisory engagement among Master Teachers across all four dimensions of VUCA.

Each of the four aspects received a very high rating, indicating consistent agreement among Master Teachers that they implement

supervisory practices addressing volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in the teaching-and-learning process. Among the dimensions, Volatility recorded the highest composite weighted mean (3.65), while Ambiguity registered the lowest (3.52). Uncertainty and Complexity followed closely, with weighted means of 3.56 and 3.55, respectively. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.34 to 0.36, indicate that the extent of supervisory practices is consistently shared among most Master Teachers across all dimensions of VUCA.

These findings affirm that Master Teachers are actively implementing the instructional supervisory practices mandated by the Department of Education (DepEd Memorandum No. 8, s. 2023) to address the challenges posed by a VUCA environment. They have moved through the essential stages of change: becoming aware of necessary changes, deciding how to adapt, implementing structural modifications, and institutionalizing these changes within the system. These practices align with the Stage Theory of Organizational Change, which integrates Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Kurt Lewin's Three-Stage Model (Glanz et al., 2008). The unfreezing, changing, and refreezing processes are evident in how Master Teachers respond to ongoing changes and incorporate them into their daily supervisory work.

The ability of Master Teachers to navigate the VUCA World through both knowledge and experience supports the ongoing transformation of the educational landscape. This adaptability is reflected in their instructional supervisory practices, which are responsive to the demands of a constantly evolving environment (Saniya & Usha, 2018; Yacob et al., 2023; Morales, 2019; Dhillon & Nguyen, 2020; Antonacopoulou, 2018; Carvan, 2015; Waller et al., 2019). Educational leadership models further emphasize that instructional supervisors—in the Philippine context, Master Teachers—must be adequately trained to enhance faculty competency for capacity building in a VUCA environment. This is necessary to produce empowered learners capable of meeting the demands of 21st-century education (Latha, 2020; Tenney, 2024; Kolga, 2021; Saniya & Usha, 2018).

In light of these findings, there is an implied call for Philippine Master Teachers to advance as adaptive innovators through deeper professional engagement. While the current extent of their supervisory practices is very high, there remains a need to strike a balance between protocol compliance and evidence-based innovation. Doing so will further strengthen their role in shaping a responsive and future-ready education system, one led by VUCA-ready instructional supervisors equipped to meet the challenges of modern education.

RPMS-PPST Level of Performance Rating among Master Teachers

The table below presents the RPMS-PPST Performance Ratings of Master Teachers, based on a sample size of 108. The corresponding percentage for each rating category follows the frequency of responses.

Table 12

RPMS-PPST Level of Performance Rating among Master Teachers

| Level | f | % |
|----------------------------------|-----|--------|
| 1.000-1.499 (Poor) | 0 | 0.00 |
| 1.500-2.499 (Unsatisfactory) | 0 | 0.00 |
| 2.500-3.499 (Satisfactory) | 0 | 0.00 |
| 3.500-4.499 (Very Satisfactory) | 95 | 87.96 |
| 4.500-5.000 (Outstanding) | 13 | 12.04 |
| Total | 108 | 100.00 |
| Mean = 4.326 (Very Satisfactory) | | |

Table 12 presents the RPMS-PPST (Results-Based Performance Management System – Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers) performance ratings of Master Teachers for School Year 2022–2023. Based on the data, the overall mean rating of 4.326 falls under the “Very Satisfactory” verbal description (DepEd Memo No. 8, s. 2023), implying that, on average, Master Teachers are performing at a very high level.

A total of 95 Master Teachers (87.96%) received a Very Satisfactory rating, while 13 (12.04%) were rated Outstanding. Notably, none of the respondents received ratings within the Poor, Unsatisfactory, or Satisfactory categories.

These results suggest that Master Teachers have been meeting the standards set by the Department of Education, which require them to attain at least a “Very Satisfactory” performance rating at the end of each school year, especially as they are expected to model exemplary teaching for Proficient Teachers (Llego, 2019). The performance of Master Teachers in the Philippines is often tied to the demonstration of effective instructional practices, engagement in professional development, and the exercise of instructional leadership. These roles align with the expectations laid out in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

The absence of lower performance ratings implies that Master Teachers are not only equipped with the necessary skills, training, and resources but are also highly motivated to excel in their professional

responsibilities. This observation is supported by related studies emphasizing the leadership and mentoring roles of Master Teachers in improving instructional quality (Mamauag, 2022; Dingal, 2023).

The Theory of Performance (ToP) by Don Elger (2007) underpins the RPMS-PPST framework. According to this theory, the performance of individuals, such as Master Teachers, should improve continuously over time. Their performance ratings are evaluated annually using a 5-point Likert Scale, based on Modes of Verification (MOVs) aligned with required standards (DepEd Memo No. 8, s. 2023). Identifying developmental needs through this process enables ongoing professional growth.

While the overall performance level is commendable, the data also highlight an area for growth. Master Teachers are encouraged to explore additional strategies for enhancing their practice, aiming for an Outstanding rating. Focusing on sustained professional development and incremental growth will not only improve their own ratings but also further elevate the quality of teaching and leadership in their respective schools.

Relationship between the Socio-Demographic Profile of Master Teachers and Their Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices in Relation to the VUCA World

The table below presents the results of the statistical analysis examining the relationship between selected variables from the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their extent of instructional supervisory practices across the four VUCA dimensions: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. The analysis is based on a sample size of 108. The computed Chi-square values and their corresponding p-values are also presented to determine the significance of the relationships.

Table 13 specifically shows the relationship between educational attainment and number of years as Master Teachers (MTs), the socio-demographic variables considered, and their corresponding ratings in each VUCA aspect, as well as the overall extent of instructional supervisory practices. The computed Chi-square (χ^2) values and p-values are presented to determine statistical significance, using a 0.05 level of significance as the threshold.

| Variables | χ^2 | P |
|---|----------|------|
| Educational Attainment and Volatility | 3.04 | 0.39 |
| Educational Attainment and Uncertainty | 2.56 | 0.46 |
| Educational Attainment and Complexity | 3.95 | 0.27 |
| Educational Attainment and Ambiguity | 2.76 | 0.43 |
| Educational Attainment and Overall Rating | 2.35 | 0.50 |
| Number of Years as MT and Volatility | 4.03 | 0.13 |
| Number of Years as MT and Uncertainty | 5.84 | 0.06 |
| Number of Years as MT and Complexity | 1.31 | 0.52 |
| Number of Years as MT and Ambiguity | 3.51 | 0.17 |
| Number of Years as MT and Overall Rating | 0.23 | 0.89 |

Legend: χ^2 =Chi square; p=P value; *=Significant (0.05 level of significance)

Based on the table, all p-values exceed the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that there are no statistically significant relationships between the educational attainment of Master Teachers and how they respond to volatility ($\chi^2 = 3.04$, $p = 0.39$), uncertainty ($\chi^2 = 2.56$, $p = 0.46$), complexity ($\chi^2 = 3.95$, $p = 0.27$), and ambiguity ($\chi^2 = 2.76$, $p = 0.43$). Similarly, educational attainment does not significantly influence the overall rating for the extent of instructional supervisory practices ($\chi^2 = 2.35$, $p = 0.50$).

Likewise, the table shows no significant relationships between the number of years Master Teachers have served in their position and how they respond to volatility ($\chi^2 = 4.03$, $p = 0.13$), uncertainty ($\chi^2 = 5.84$, $p = 0.06$), complexity ($\chi^2 = 1.31$, $p = 0.52$), and ambiguity ($\chi^2 = 3.51$, $p = 0.17$). The number of years in service also does not significantly affect the overall extent of their instructional supervisory practices ($\chi^2 = 0.23$, $p = 0.89$). While the p-value for uncertainty ($p = 0.06$) is close to the threshold of significance, it remains statistically inconclusive at the 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Implication-wise, the data suggest that neither educational attainment nor length of service as a Master Teacher significantly influences how they perform their instructional supervisory duties or respond to a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Regardless of academic credentials or tenure, Master Teachers carry out their roles and responsibilities in alignment with DepEd mandates and are responsive to the demands of the VUCA world. In other words, neither advanced degrees nor longer service guarantees greater adaptability or supervisory effectiveness in

a VUCA context.

This insight aligns with the view that changes in the educational landscape occur regularly, especially within the Department of Education, as it continues to adapt to evolving societal and institutional demands (Bondoc, 2017). Accordingly, Master Teachers must be equipped with socio-emotional skills to remain agile and resilient in the face of uncertainty, regardless of their educational background or years of service (Binti Ali & Abd Latif, 2022; Hadar et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that this finding stands in contrast to earlier studies by Snyder (2018) and Rizzo (2023), which emphasized the impact of educational attainment on leadership decision-making, and by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who highlighted the influence of experience on a leader's ability to handle complex educational situations. In contrast, the present study supports the findings of Heifetz et al. (2009), which argue that effective leadership in uncertain environments is not necessarily shaped by formal education or tenure but rather by the leader's adaptive capacity to respond to emerging challenges.

In a VUCA world, a Master Teacher's effectiveness is less about "what they know" or "how long they have served," and more about "how they adapt." This highlights the need for the Department of Education to invest in professional development programs that strengthen adaptability and innovation among Master Teachers. As emphasized by the Stage Theory of Organizational Change (Glanz et al., 2008), educational leaders must continually move through the cycle of becoming aware of change, deciding how to respond, implementing solutions, and institutionalizing those changes, a process that is especially critical for effective instructional supervision in the VUCA environment.

Relationship between the Socio-Demographic Profile of Master Teachers and Their RPMS-PPST Level of Performance

The table below presents the relationship between selected variables from the socio-demographic profile of Master Teachers and their RPMS-PPST (Results-based Performance Management System – Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers) level of performance rating, based on a sample size of 108. This analysis addresses the fifth research problem stated in the study.

Table 14 shows the variables tested from the socio-demographic profile, specifically educational attainment and number of years as Master Teachers (MTs), and their correlation to the performance ratings of Master

Teachers. The Chi-square (χ^2) values and their corresponding p-values are presented to determine statistical significance, using a 0.05 level of significance as the criterion.

Table 14

Relationship between the Socio-demographic Profile of Master Teachers and Their RPMS-PPST Level of Performance Rating

| Variables | χ^2 | P |
|---|----------|-------|
| Educational Attainment and RPMS-PPST level of performance | 8.76 | 0.03* |
| Number of Years as MT and RPMS-PPST level of performance | 1.20 | 0.55 |

Legend: χ^2 =Chi square; p=P value; *=Significant (0.05 level of significance)

Based on the table, the first variable, educational attainment, has a p-value less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between Master Teachers' educational attainment and their RPMS-PPST performance rating ($\chi^2 = 8.76$, $p = 0.03$). Those with full-fledged Doctorate degrees (refer to Table 6) recorded the highest performance ratings.

In contrast, there is no significant relationship between the number of years as Master Teachers (MTs) and their RPMS-PPST performance rating ($\chi^2 = 1.20$, $p = 0.55$). This suggests that the length of service alone in the Master Teacher position does not influence performance ratings under the RPMS-PPST guidelines. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected for educational attainment and accepted for the number of years as an MT.

These results imply that higher educational attainment equips Master Teachers with the knowledge, skills, and systemic thinking necessary to meet RPMS-PPST expectations. Advanced training likely enables these individuals to design deeper, evidence-based Means of Verification (MOVs) aligned with PPST indicators. This supports the idea from Don Elger's Theory of Performance (ToP) that professional development is a key factor in improving performance. Thus, the Department of Education is encouraged to prioritize access to advanced degree programs for Master Teachers and to consider mentorship pairing, in which Doctorate-holding MTs can support those without graduate degrees to improve performance.

These findings align with earlier studies suggesting that academic preparation is a factor affecting teacher performance. Rizzo (2023) noted that prior academic work influences performance, while Abarro (2018) and Gayomale-Sala (2020) confirmed that educational attainment can

affect RPMS-PPST ratings. Goe (2007) also emphasized that professional development through formal education contributes significantly to quality teaching.

On the other hand, years of experience as an MT was not a significant predictor of RPMS-PPST performance. This challenges the common assumption that longevity equates to mastery. The results support Abarro's (2018) findings that length of service does not necessarily affect RPMS-PPST ratings. As Goe (2007) and Milanowski (2004) noted, experience alone does not guarantee effectiveness, especially if not paired with ongoing professional growth. However, this finding contrasts with Gayomale-Sala's (2020) results, which suggested that teaching experience may influence performance ratings.

In conclusion, educational attainment appears to elevate performance, while years of service without continuous learning do not. Hence, aside from tenure, DepEd must invest in diverse professional learning pathways to fully maximize the potential of Master Teachers as instructional supervisors.

Relationship between Master Teachers' Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices in Relation to VUCA Worlds and Their RPMS-PPST Level of Performance

The table below presents the variables tested for the relationship between the Master Teachers' extent of instructional supervisory practices and their RPMS-PPST level of performance, based on a sample of 108. The computed Chi-square (χ^2) values and corresponding p-values are provided to determine the statistical significance of the relationships. This analysis addresses the final research question stated in the study.

Table 15

Relationship between Master Teachers' Extent of Instructional Supervisory Practices in Relation to the VUCA World and Their RPMS-PPST Level of Performance

| VUCA World | rs | P |
|----------------|------|------|
| Volatility | 0.15 | 0.12 |
| Uncertainty | 0.08 | 0.43 |
| Complexity | 0.12 | 0.21 |
| Ambiguity | 0.07 | 0.47 |
| Overall Rating | 0.10 | 0.31 |

Legend: rs=Spearman's rho; p=P value; *=Significant (0.05 level of significance)

Table 15 shows the relationship between Master Teachers' extent of instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA world (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) and their RPMS-PPST (Results-Based Performance Management System – Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers) level of performance. The Spearman's rho (r_s) values and corresponding p-values are provided to determine statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Based on the table, all p-values are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant relationship between the extent of instructional supervisory practices and RPMS-PPST performance ratings. Specifically, the extent of instructional supervisory practices in relation to volatility and RPMS-PPST level of performance yielded $r_s = 0.15$, $p = 0.12$; uncertainty and RPMS-PPST level of performance yielded $r_s = 0.08$, $p = 0.43$; complexity and RPMS-PPST level of performance yielded $r_s = 0.12$, $p = 0.21$; ambiguity and RPMS-PPST level of performance yielded $r_s = 0.07$, $p = 0.47$; and the overall rating and RPMS-PPST level of performance yielded $r_s = 0.10$, $p = 0.31$. This suggests that how Master Teachers manage the VUCA world does not significantly affect their RPMS-PPST performance ratings. With this, the null hypothesis has been accepted.

The absence of correlation implies that the RPMS-PPST indicators may not fully capture VUCA-related competencies. The indicators focus more on technical compliance, such as the quality of instructional delivery and the completion of MOV portfolios, rather than on adaptive competencies required in a VUCA environment. As such, a Master Teacher who develops a hybrid learning model during class disruptions may still receive the same rating as one who does not, since the performance framework does not reward VUCA-based innovations. Therefore, the performance rating system may need to evolve and be reassessed to address the demands of a VUCA world.

Even though the RPMS-PPST framework is in place, the findings suggest that Master Teachers may be managing VUCA challenges without these efforts being captured in performance ratings. As emphasized by the Stage Theory of Organizational Change (Rogers & Lewin, 2008), change must progress through stages of awareness, decision-making, implementation, and institutionalization. If supported by strong institutional frameworks, Master Teachers can adapt well to the demands of VUCA and share their practices through professional learning communities.

These results do not fully align with studies by Fullan (2011), Hattie (2009), and Hambleton (2020), which emphasize that adaptability and VUCA responsiveness should be central to instructional leaders' effectiveness. The

data point to the importance of professional development programs focused on equipping Master Teachers with VUCA competencies. Without these, the ability to navigate uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity may not be fully translated into performance metrics.

Additionally, although Master Teachers may be performing well according to the RPMS-PPST ratings, their ability to manage VUCA challenges may not yet be fully reflected in these evaluations. This delay may be due to their ongoing adjustments to new challenges that are not explicitly addressed in the current evaluation criteria. In this context, adaptive leadership and resilience, as discussed by Bennet and Lemoine (2014), are critical in gradually improving outcomes. Factors such as teacher motivation, school leadership, and institutional culture may also play a more dominant role in influencing RPMS-PPST ratings than VUCA-related practices, as Glickman et al. (2017) found.

In conclusion, the disconnect between VUCA-responsive practices and performance ratings underscores the need to align evaluation criteria with the realities of 21st-century educational leadership. What is measured must reflect what truly matters: adaptability, innovation, and resilience in a rapidly changing world.

Synthesis

This study examined Master Teachers' profiles, their instructional supervisory practices in relation to the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) world, and their performance ratings. The salient findings reveal insights into the importance of professional development, instructional leadership, performance evaluation, and adaptability in the Philippine educational landscape.

Based on the results, while most Master Teachers (63.89%) have completed the academic requirements for their Master's degree, only a small proportion (9.26%) have obtained a Doctorate (see Table 6). This suggests that Master Teachers need to pursue further professional development. Upgrading qualifications may promote systemic thinking and enable them to design stronger, evidence-based MOVs aligned with the PPST indicators. As shown in Table 10, there is a statistically significant relationship between educational attainment and RPMS-PPST performance rating ($p = 0.03$). Conversely, the number of years in service as a Master Teacher does not significantly influence performance ratings, challenging the assumption that longevity equates to mastery. Thus, the "Very Satisfactory" average rating (4.326) reflected in Table 8 can be more closely attributed to educational

attainment than to length of service. In short, education matters; experience alone does not.

Table 11 shows that Master Teachers achieved a very great extent of instructional supervisory practices across all aspects of VUCA. However, several of the lowest-rated statements within each aspect highlight areas for improvement.

Under Volatility (Table 7), the lowest weighted mean (3.42) reveals that Master Teachers are somewhat less focused on creating action or improvement plans to track institutional development. This suggests the need to enhance planning competencies and to integrate volatility-focused programs into their strategies.

In terms of Uncertainty (Table 8), the lowest score (3.39) indicates that Master Teachers are less focused on implementing Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) in compliance with established protocols. This points to a tension between innovation and bureaucratic requirements. The Department of Education should consider simplifying procedures and supporting teacher-initiated PPAs to reduce this tension.

For Complexity (Table 9), the lowest score (3.40) implies that Master Teachers are less attentive to designing systems aligned with learner-centered philosophies and effectively connecting these systems to various stakeholders. This reveals a possible misalignment between DepEd's bureaucratic systems and the ideal pedagogical approach of learner-centered instruction.

In the case of Ambiguity (Table 10), the lowest rating (3.22) suggests that Master Teachers are not fully integrating research on Philippine educational developments into their practice. While they demonstrate proactive management of ambiguity, research-based decision-making remains limited, highlighting a gap in evidence-based leadership.

To address these areas, Master Teachers must be provided with diverse learning pathways and development opportunities. These should target enhancing planning and decision-making skills, protocol-aligned innovation in PPAs, contextualizing learner-centered philosophies, and fostering research engagement to transform them into research-oriented instructional supervisors.

As shown in Table 13, neither educational attainment nor years of service significantly influences how Master Teachers respond to the VUCA world. Regardless of credentials or tenure, Master Teachers consistently demonstrate a capacity to fulfill their instructional roles in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. This confirms that neither advanced degrees nor years in service alone determine their effectiveness in managing

VUCA-related challenges.

Table 14 further reveals no significant relationship between the extent of instructional supervisory practices related to VUCA and RPMS-PPST performance ratings, despite consistently high ratings (Table 12). This disconnect implies that the RPMS-PPST indicators primarily assess technical compliance, such as curriculum delivery and MOV portfolio completion, rather than adaptive competencies. As such, the current evaluation system fails to recognize or reward VUCA-responsive behaviors.

Despite this, Master Teachers remain capable of navigating the VUCA world, particularly when supported by institutional mechanisms. The lack of correlation highlights the need to realign performance assessment tools with 21st-century demands. Indicators must evolve to reflect the reality of VUCA-driven leadership in schools. For instance, a Master Teacher who develops a hybrid learning program during class disruptions should be evaluated differently from one who does not, yet current tools treat both equally.

Although studies such as those by Fullan (2011), Hattie (2009), and Hambleton (2020) emphasize the need for adaptive leadership, the RPMS-PPST continues to underrepresent these skills. Consequently, tailored professional development focused on VUCA-readiness is crucial. Without appropriate training, Master Teachers may fulfill their roles effectively yet remain unequipped to meet rapidly changing educational challenges.

While performance ratings remain high (Table 12), the adaptability of Master Teachers in VUCA environments may not yet be fully reflected. Their adjustments to systemic challenges might be gradual and go unnoticed in performance appraisals. According to Bennet and Lemoine (2014), adaptive leadership and resilience are critical for long-term success. Other influential factors, such as motivation, leadership support, and school culture, may also contribute more strongly to performance ratings than VUCA-readiness (Glickman et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the observed relationships, or lack thereof, among educational attainment, experience, VUCA management, and performance ratings highlight the need to bridge the gap between what is evaluated and what is essential in today's educational context. While Master Teachers are highly rated and clearly capable of operating in VUCA environments, the system must evolve to reflect and support this capacity. The proposed theory introduced in this study offers a framework for helping Master Teachers respond to educational trends through professional development and become future-ready leaders. By redefining what counts in performance evaluation, the Department of Education can ensure that VUCA-readiness

is not – something is missing here.

Conclusion

The study explored the link among Master Teachers' socio-demographic profile, instructional supervisory practices in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world, and performance ratings under the RPMS-PPST framework. These variables are the bases for the development of the VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory.

The findings underscore insights about professional development, adaptive leadership, and systemic evaluation in the Philippine educational system. Generally, the study reveals that even if MTs are highly rated (RPMS-PPST performance rating level). They are capable of managing VUCA (the extent level of instructional supervisory practices); the current RPMS-PPST framework does not align with adaptive competencies (VUCA). Instead, the evaluation system prioritizes technical compliance, such as completing MOVs (Means of Verification) and adhering to structured protocols, over leadership in uncertainty, innovation, and systemic thinking. Even if it was not anticipated in the study, the research has observed a need to reassess performance assessment among teachers to produce 21st-century educators who are adaptable to VUCA. For a broader discussion, the following conclusions have been drawn:

Educational attainment matters, but experience does not. While higher academic qualifications (particularly postgraduate degrees) correlate with better RPMS-PPST ratings, the number of years as an MT does not significantly affect performance. This challenges the assumption that longevity equates to mastery, which emphasizes the value of continuous professional development.

There are instructional supervisory practices in the VUCA world that need to be strengthened. Master Teachers demonstrate very high readiness across all VUCA dimensions; however, key areas in each aspect still need to be maximized. In Volatility, the weakness in structured action or improvement planning points to the need for training in strategic foresight. In Uncertainty, lower engagement with rigid protocols highlights a tension between innovation and bureaucracy, calling for DepEd to streamline its processes. In Complexity, the difficulty in aligning learner-centered systems with DepEd's bureaucratic structures reveals an "implementation gap" that requires contextualized solutions. In Ambiguity, the limited engagement in research underscores the need for evidence-based decision-making frameworks.

Neither education nor experience predicts adaptability to VUCA.

Readiness in the VUCA world among Master Teachers is influenced more by mindset, institutional support, and targeted training.

There is no significant link between VUCA and the RPMS-PPST rating. The current assessment framework does not effectively capture the adaptive competencies required in a VUCA world. Therefore, it is essential to provide Master Teachers with differentiated professional development and ensure the availability of school-based resources to support their growth and effectiveness in navigating VUCA challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends considering Kitane's VUCA-Oriented Leadership Framework (see Appendix A) as a helpful tool for navigating the VUCA world. This framework can benefit not only Master Teachers but all educators in becoming VUCA-ready, especially in response to the ongoing changes in the Philippine educational landscape. It seeks to standardize adaptive practices in line with the department's evolving priorities.

Furthermore, for DepEd instructional supervisors aiming to attain higher RPMS-PPST performance ratings, greater emphasis should be placed on pursuing higher educational attainment.

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Appendix A (Proposed Theory)

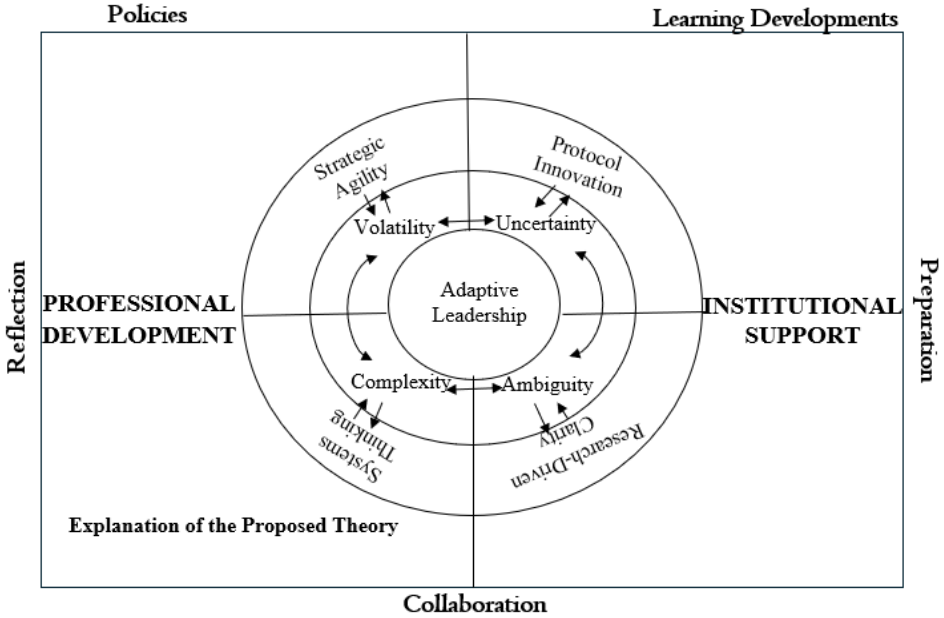
Kitane's VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory (K-VOLT): A Model for Adaptive Instructional Supervision in Education

Rationale

The development of Kitane's VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory (K-VOLT) emerged from the need to understand how Master Teachers (MTs) adapt and function effectively within a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) environment. This expanded theory builds on emerging leadership frameworks and is specifically contextualized for Master Teachers. Grounded in the latest findings, the study identified the necessity of a new leadership model—one that positions adaptive leadership as central to MT effectiveness in addressing VUCA-related challenges. The K-VOLT theory was therefore conceptualized to address this need and align leadership practices with the evolving demands of a VUCA-driven educational landscape. This proposed theory remains subject to validation, particularly regarding its testability and predictive power. The diagram below reflects both the study's empirical results and a synthesis of key concepts derived from the findings.

Figure 3

Diagram of Kitane's VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory (K-VOLT)



Kitane's VUCA-Oriented Leadership Theory (K-VOLT) positions Adaptive Leadership as the central capacity that enables Master Teachers to thrive in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) world. The theory directly stems from the findings that neither education nor experience can predict one's adaptability with it. This is based on the empirical findings that there is no significant relationship between instructional supervisory practices and education, and between these practices and the number of years they have been MTs (see Table 13). The VUCA elements are interlinked in the model (connected by arrows), as supported by Wright & Wigmore (2022), reflecting their interdependence. They manifest simultaneously in most educational disruptions, reinforcing each other's effects. These four elements form the core challenges faced by Master Teachers. To each, the framework proposes a corresponding adaptive leadership competency derived from the study's analysis of MT needs to be maximized and strengthened:

- Volatility requires Strategic Agility, as MTs need flexibility and responsiveness to shifting priorities and rapid changes (based on Table 7).
- Uncertainty requires Protocol Innovation by highlighting the role

of innovative, localized protocols in addressing unclear guidelines, especially during times like the pandemic (based on Table 8).

- Complexity needs Systems Thinking since MTs must view challenges holistically, recognizing patterns and interdependencies, particularly in instructional supervision and program implementation (based on Table 9); and,
- Ambiguity needs Research-Driven Clarity so that when issues are unclear or open to multiple interpretations, MTs must rely on evidence-based decision-making and reflective inquiry (see Table 10).

These elements function as both inputs, shaping the adaptive leadership process, and outputs, representing the evolved competencies developed through that process.

In the rectangular shape, two aspects are identified: professional development and institutional support – both significant in developing Master Teachers towards adaptive leadership and keys to developing the different adaptive competencies. Professional development, although it does not translate directly into VUCA adaptability, is necessary since higher educational attainment, particularly postgraduate degrees, correlates with better RPMS-PPST ratings.

Institutional support, on the other hand, is necessary since the advancement of different adaptive competencies needs to be supported by the institution to bridge the gap in the VUCA world. It provides the structure and culture necessary for sustaining adaptive practices. By embracing these two, Master Teachers can be cultivated as adaptive individuals who can navigate and thrive in dynamic learning environments, which are necessary for instructional supervisors.

On the other hand, the theory includes external factors in its outermost layers, which claim that the adaptive leadership of instructional supervisors can influence them. The outermost layer of the framework identifies systemic levers to enable adaptive leadership. These factors are

- Policies through the evolution of new assessment measures, which are VUCA-compliant;
- Learning Developments by leaning towards training programs for MTs to become VUCA-compliant;
- Reflection on what needs to be modified in the system.
- Preparation in pre-service training programs by embedding VUCA pedagogy; and
- Collaboration with stakeholders through interaction with the

strategies necessary for VUCA.

The external factors are inclusive in nature, in the sense that they are not only limited to the Master Teachers, but also to the stakeholders and even pre-service teachers – all need to adapt to the VUCA world. It is not a sole responsibility, but a shared leadership endeavor.

K-VOLT not only provides theoretical insight but also offers actionable guidance for shaping leadership preparation and policy in VUCA contexts.

While many variables were not statistically significant, this does not diminish the theoretical or practical value of the leadership framework. Even in the absence of strong correlations among other variables, the framework provides a structured lens to understand supervisory mindsets, leadership behaviors, and contextual dynamics that quantitative measures alone may not capture. In other words, the framework highlights context-specific behaviors and decision-making processes that are critical to interpreting leadership effectiveness.

Community-Level Disaster Rehabilitation and Recovery: Performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees in the Tagoloan River Basin, Southern Philippines

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Abstract

The recurrence of climate-related hazards highlights the critical role of local governments in ensuring resilience and recovery. This study assessed the performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) in implementing post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery functions in the Tagoloan River Basin (TRB) in the Southern Philippines. Using a descriptive mixed-methods design, data were collected from 152 respondents across 26 barangays and complemented by focus group discussions. Results show that BDRRMC tasks were only partially accomplished, with overall performance rated satisfactory (mean = 3.28). Multiple linear regression analysis identified the Punong Barangay's educational attainment and years in service, BDRRMC budget allocations, and community experience with floods and heavy rainfall as significant predictors of performance. Qualitative findings revealed persistent challenges related to resource constraints, coordination gaps, environmental governance issues, and limitations in recovery planning. While barangay mechanisms demonstrate commitment to post-disaster functions, systemic institutional and capacity constraints hinder effectiveness. The study concludes that strengthening leadership capacity, ensuring sustained financing, and reinforcing institutional support mechanisms are essential to improving post-disaster recovery outcomes. The findings underscore the need for targeted capacity-building and governance reforms to bridge the gap between statutory mandates and community-level implementation in river basin settings.

Keywords: disaster rehabilitation; recovery governance; barangay DRRMC; community resilience; river basin; local governance; Philippines

Introduction

The Philippines is consistently ranked among the most disaster-prone countries in the world, with river basin communities particularly vulnerable to climate-related hazards. In 2011, Tropical Storm Sendong (international name Washi) devastated Cagayan de Oro City and communities along the Tagoloan River Basin (TRB), resulting in catastrophic losses of lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure. Six years later, Tropical Storm Vinta (Tembin) again struck Northern Mindanao, displacing families in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, due to flash floods originating from upland headwaters (Citizens' Disaster Response Center, 2017). These recurrent disasters underscore the urgent need for sustained governance interventions that go beyond emergency response toward long-term rehabilitation and recovery.

In response to the country's heightened disaster risks, the Philippine government institutionalized a comprehensive disaster risk governance framework through the enactment of the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (Republic Act 10121) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The law devolved primary responsibilities to local government units (LGUs), mandating the creation of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) as frontline institutions responsible for the four thematic areas of disaster risk reduction and management: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and rehabilitation and recovery. Funding support is provided through the Barangay DRRM Fund, equivalent to five percent of barangay revenues, including a Quick Response Fund.

The Tagoloan River Basin, the country's 13th largest river system, spans approximately 180,000 hectares across Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental and encompasses 26 barangays draining into Macajalar Bay. Its diverse topography sustains agriculture, industry, and settlements, yet simultaneously exposes communities to recurrent flooding and heavy rainfall. For communities in this watershed, climate-related hazards are not isolated events but persistent governance challenges that require institutionalized recovery mechanisms.

Within this context, the role of BDRRMCs in disaster rehabilitation and recovery, the fourth pillar of the DRRM framework, becomes particularly critical. This pillar involves post-disaster damage and needs assessment (PDNA), restoration of basic services, rehabilitation of infrastructure, and the implementation of adaptive measures to reduce future risks. Despite its importance, empirical assessments of barangay-level performance in disaster rehabilitation and recovery remain limited, particularly in river

basin settings.

Beyond its local empirical contribution, this study situates barangay-level disaster rehabilitation and recovery within broader global development and governance agendas. Specifically, it contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through its focus on community recovery institutions; SDG 13 (Climate Action) by examining adaptive responses to climate-related hazards; and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through its analysis of leadership capacity, institutional performance, and accountability at the barangay level. By grounding these global goals in the governance realities of river basin communities in the Philippines, the study demonstrates how frontline institutions shape recovery outcomes, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

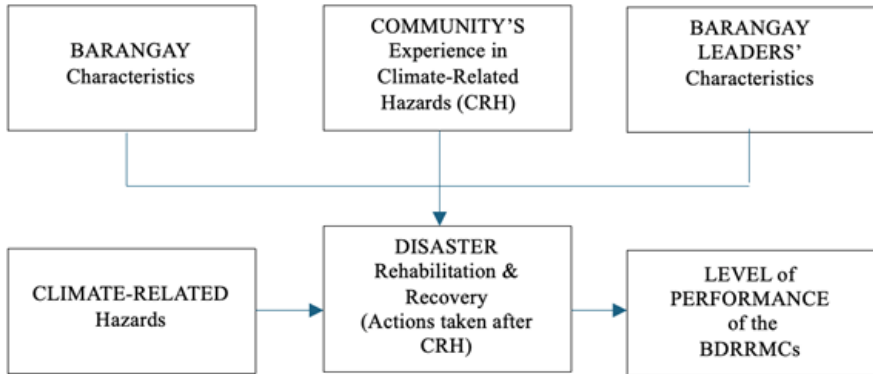
The primary objective of this study is to assess the performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) in the Tagoloan River Basin with respect to their mandated functions in disaster rehabilitation and recovery under Republic Act 10121 and its IRR.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the level of performance of BDRRMCs in disaster rehabilitation and recovery.
2. Examine the extent to which barangay characteristics, leadership attributes of the Punong Barangay, and community experiences with climate-related hazards explain variations in BDRRMC performance; and
3. Identify issues and concerns affecting the effectiveness of BDRRMCs in post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery.

Figure 1

Schematic Diagram Showing the Relationship of the Variables of the Study.



Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on community-based disaster risk governance and institutional resilience theory, which emphasize the central role of local institutions, leadership, and collective learning in shaping disaster recovery outcomes (Stoker, 1998; Norris et al., 2008; Tierney, 2014). Community-based disaster governance conceptualizes barangays not merely as implementers of national policies but as frontline governance units whose effectiveness depends on leadership capacity, organizational resources, and social context.

Institutional resilience theory explains how organizations adapt, reorganize, and learn following repeated shocks. In hazard-prone environments, such as river basins, repeated exposure to disasters fosters institutional learning and adaptive practices that enhance recovery performance over time (Lindell & Hwang, 2008; Onuma et al., 2017). These perspectives are consistent with disaster risk management and recovery models that emphasize adaptive capacity, multi-level coordination, and institutional learning as determinants of effective post-disaster rehabilitation.

Guided by these theories, the study posits that BDRRMC performance in disaster rehabilitation and recovery is shaped not solely by compliance with RA 10121, but by the barangay's institutional resilience - its capacity to mobilize leadership, resources, and collective experience to restore and improve post-disaster conditions.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the principles of community-based disaster risk governance, which emphasize the role of local institutions, leadership, and contextual factors in shaping recovery outcomes (Gaillard, 2007; Norris et al., 2008; Tierney, 2014). Specifically, the framework situates Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs)' performance in rehabilitation and recovery as the dependent variable, influenced by both institutional and contextual determinants.

The independent variables are drawn from the literature on disaster resilience and localized governance. These include:

1. Barangay characteristics - population size and budget allocations, which shape the committee's capacity to mobilize resources.
2. Leadership attributes of the Punong Barangay - educational attainment, age, gender, and years in service, reflecting the importance of capable and experienced leadership in mobilizing recovery.
3. Community exposure to climate-related hazards - specifically floods, heavy rainfall, and erratic or unseasonal rain- conditions the level of institutional learning, preparedness, and adaptive response.

The linkages among these variables are informed by global and local literature. Studies show that well-resourced barangays with strong leadership and prior hazard experience are better able to mobilize collective action, conduct post-disaster needs assessments, and implement effective rehabilitation programs (Kusumasari et al., 2010; DILG-LGA, 2018). The framework thus posits that BDRRMC performance varies as a function of these interrelated factors, mediated by the statutory mandates of RA 10121 and guided by the National DRRM Plan.

Through this conceptual lens, BDRRMC performance is assessed by the extent to which BDRRM committees fulfill their mandated roles in rehabilitation and recovery, including restoring community functions, supporting displaced populations, and adopting measures to reduce future risks. The framework highlights that recovery effectiveness is not solely determined by compliance with policies but also by the interplay of leadership, institutional capacity, and lived hazard experience.

Disaster Rehabilitation and Recovery

Measuring disaster recovery is central to disaster governance because it informs policy decisions, resource allocation, and institutional

accountability (Cheng et al., 2015). Recovery outcomes vary according to hazard characteristics, socio-cultural context, geographic conditions, and the policy frameworks adopted by authorities (Gaillard, 2007). Scholars emphasize that recovery is not merely a return to pre-disaster conditions, but a process of building resilience and reducing future risks (UNDRR, 2015).

In the Philippine context, studies on barangay disaster governance have focused largely on preparedness and coordination, often highlighting gaps between statutory mandates and implementation capacity (DILG-LGA, 2018; Nacaya, 2021). Research consistently shows that leadership competence, resource availability, and hazard experience influence local disaster governance outcomes (Kusumasari et al., 2010; Kim & Zakour, 2017). However, few studies have examined disaster rehabilitation and recovery at the barangay level, particularly within river basin systems. This study addresses this gap by providing an empirical, basin-scale assessment of BDRRMC recovery performance.

Demographics, Leadership, and Hazard Experience in Community DRRM

Disaster governance literature highlights the influence of demographic conditions, leadership capacity, and hazard experience on community-level DRRM outcomes. Communities with stronger administrative and fiscal capacity tend to mobilize recovery interventions more effectively (Kim & Zakour, 2017). Leadership features, particularly educational attainment and experience, are consistently associated with improved coordination, policy interpretation, and collective action during recovery (Kusumasari et al., 2010; Thomas et al., 2015). Moreover, prior exposure to floods and heavy rainfall enhances risk perception, institutional learning, and adaptive behavior (Lindell & Hwang, 2008; Onuma et al., 2017). These strands of literature collectively support the analytical framework of this study.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from focus group discussions.

Assessment Parameters for BDRRMC Performance

The performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) was assessed using a set of indicators derived from Republic Act 10121, its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), and the operational guidance issued through Operation Listo! and Listo si Kap!, which delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Punong Barangay and BDRRMCs in implementing the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (PDRRM) framework. These policy instruments collectively define the statutory and operational standards for barangay-level disaster risk reduction, including rehabilitation and recovery functions.

Based on these mandates, assessment parameters focused on the extent to which BDRRMCs performed their prescribed post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery tasks. Data were generated through structured survey instruments administered to Punong Barangays and BDRRMC members, supplemented by coordination with municipal and barangay offices to validate information through in-person interviews and focus group discussions. Respondents were asked to rate the extent of implementation for each mandated function using a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater compliance and functionality.

Statistical Tools

A range of statistical techniques was applied to ensure rigor in data analysis, aligned with the study's objectives:

- **Descriptive Statistics** (frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation): Used to summarize the demographic profile of respondents and to assess the overall performance level of BDRRMCs (Objectives 1 and 2).
- **Inferential Statistics** (T-test and F-test): Employed to test for significant differences in BDRRMC performance across groups defined by selected independent variables.
- **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLRA)**, including MLRA with dummy variables: Utilized to determine the extent to which barangay characteristics, leadership attributes, and hazard experiences explain variations in BDRRMC performance. All regression models were tested for multicollinearity, and the results confirmed that the independent variables were not collinear, ensuring the validity of the findings.

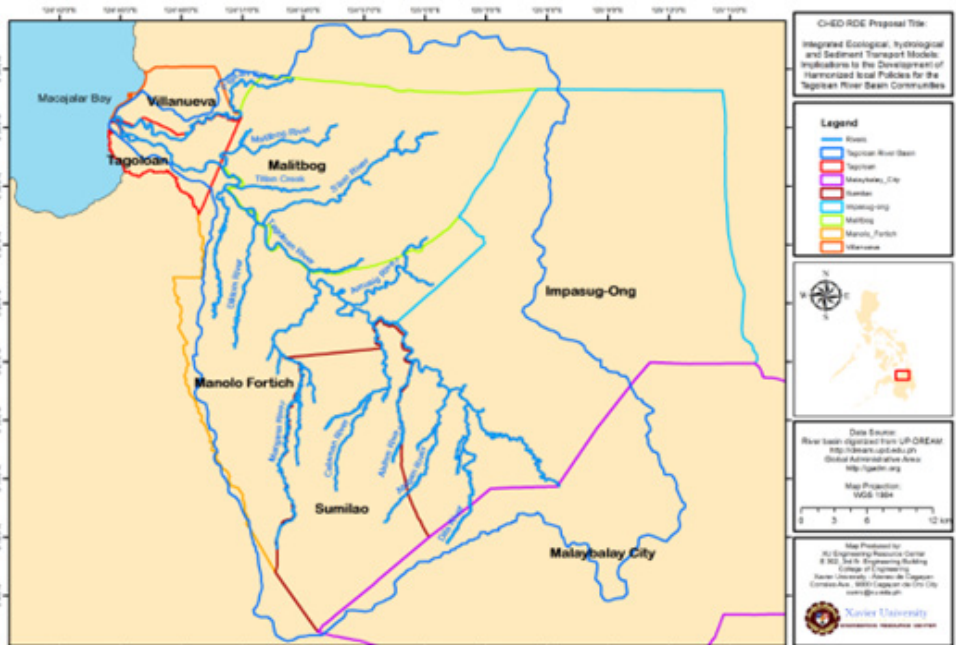
These methods collectively allowed the study to capture both the descriptive state of BDRRMC performance and the explanatory power of leadership, institutional, and contextual factors.

Research Environment

The research was conducted in the Tagoloan River Basin (TRB), located in Northern Mindanao, Southern Philippines. The basin spans eight local government units (LGUs), consisting of three downstream municipalities in Misamis Oriental Province and five upstream municipalities in Bukidnon Province. The TRB encompasses 26 barangays distributed across these LGUs, covering approximately 180,000 hectares of forest, plateaus, valleys, and waterways. The basin's major rivers include the Tagoloan, Malitbog, Siloo, Titian, Mangima, Alulum, Amusig, and Dila rivers (see Figure 2). These hydrological systems play a vital role in sustaining livelihoods but also expose communities to recurrent floods and climate-related hazards.

Figure 2

Map Showing the Municipalities Included in the Study



Respondents and Sampling Procedure

A total of 152 respondents were included in the study, with the

sample size determined using Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$, $Z = 1.96$) and a margin of error of 0.103. The sample was proportionately allocated across the 26 barangays within the Tagoloan River Basin (TRB) to ensure adequate representation of each community.

Respondents consisted of barangay council members, BDRRMC members from the private sector, and key barangay officials, including the Punong Barangays, Barangay Secretaries, and Barangay Treasurers. A combination of random and purposive sampling techniques was employed to capture both general representation and the inclusion of respondents with direct roles in disaster rehabilitation and recovery. This sampling approach ensured that the perspectives of both barangay leadership and committee members actively involved in post-disaster governance were adequately represented.

Results and Discussion

Performance of BDRRMCs in Disaster Rehabilitation and Recovery

Table 1 summarizes respondents' ratings on the performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) in disaster rehabilitation and recovery across the Tagoloan River Basin (TRB). Overall, 51.32% of respondents rated BDRRMC performance as very satisfactory to excellent, 15.13% as satisfactory, while 33.55% rated performance as low to very low. The overall mean score of 3.28 (SD = 1.55) indicates a generally satisfactory level of performance, though with marked variability across barangays.

Indicator-level results reveal that BDRRMCs performed better in coordination and control functions than in resource and planning-intensive tasks. Higher levels of implementation were reported for ensuring peace and order (72.37%), assisting clearing operations (70.39%), coordinating with the Local DRRM Office on community re-entry advisories (66.45%), and submitting consolidated reports (65.13%). These functions reflect strong vertical coordination with higher LGUs and are essential during the immediate post-disaster phase.

In contrast, rehabilitation-focused and resource-dependent functions were less consistently implemented. Less than 58% of respondents affirmed effective performance in post-disaster needs assessment, the distribution of financial and material assistance from the Barangay DRRM Fund, the procurement of additional relief goods, and the proposal of priority infrastructure projects for risk reduction. These findings suggest

partial compliance with RA 10121 mandates, particularly in activities requiring technical capacity, budget management, and long-term recovery planning. The results indicate that while barangays can manage short-term coordination, sustained recovery efforts remain uneven.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by Ratings on the Performance of the BDRRMCs Considering Disaster Rehabilitation & Recovery (Actions taken after Climate-related Hazard)

| Level of Performance | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Excellent (4.60-5.00) | 49 | 32.24 |
| Very Satisfactory (3.70-4.59) | 29 | 19.08 |
| Satisfactory (2.80-3.69) | 23 | 15.13 |
| Low (1.90-2.79) | 18 | 11.84 |
| Very Low (1.0-1.89) | 33 | 21.71 |
| Total | 152 | 100.00 |

Mean: 3.28

Standard Deviation:1.55

Description: satisfactory

| Indicators | % mean | Desc |
|--|--------|------|
| Actions taken after Climate-related Hazard | 3.28 | Sat |

| BDRRMC had recommended to the SB (Barangay Council) the following | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Continuously assisted the city/municipality rescue teams | 57.89 |
| 2. Coordinated with LDRRMO regarding the advisory to return to Communities | 66.45 |
| 3. Procured additional goods, if necessary | 54.61 |
| 4. Assisted the city/municipal engineering office in clearing operations | 70.39 |
| 5. Conducted ocular inspection around the community for post-disaster needs assessment | 53.95 |
| 6. Ensured peace and order in the barangay | 72.37 |
| 7. Proposed to the city/municipality priority infrastructure projects for the protection of the residents to reduce residents risk against climate-related hazard | 55.26 |
| 8. Accomplished and submitted consolidated report upon termination of the disaster operations to LDRRMO | 65.13 |
| 9. All agencies concerned were furnished with copies of the reports | 56.58 |
| 10. Financial & material support distributed to affected residents from BDRRM Fund | 53.29 |
| 11. Assisted the Higher LGUs and other organization/s in the distribution of financial & material support to affected residents | 55.92 |

Determinants of BDRRMC Performance

Table 2 presents the results of the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLRA) examining the influence of barangay characteristics, Punong Barangay (PB) attributes, and community hazard experience on BDRRMC performance. The model was highly significant ($F = 9.82$, $p < 0.01$) and explained 23% of the variance in performance.

Among leadership attributes, the educational attainment of the Punong Barangay exerted the strongest influence, with a one-unit increase associated with a 0.74-point improvement in BDRRMC performance. Years of service also contributed positively ($\beta = 0.06$), underscoring the importance of experience, institutional memory, and governance networks in disaster recovery leadership. These findings affirm the role of human capital in effective barangay-level disaster governance.

Resource availability, as reflected in the BDRRMC budget, showed a positive, though modest, relationship with performance, indicating that access to financial resources enhances the capacity to support affected households and sustain recovery activities. In addition, community experience with floods ($\beta = 0.04$) and heavy rainfall ($\beta = 0.01$) were significant predictors, suggesting that repeated exposure to hazards fosters institutional learning and adaptive practices that improve recovery performance.

Collectively, these results demonstrate that BDRRMC performance is shaped by an interaction of leadership capacity, resource sufficiency, and experiential learning, rather than by formal mandates alone.

Table 2

Dependent Variable: Functionality of the BDRRMC in Disaster Rehabilitation and Recovery

| Independent Variables | •Regression Coefficients | T Values |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| X1: Educational attainment | 0.74 | 4.01** |
| X2: Gender | -0.009 | -0.03ns |
| X3: Age | 0.01 | 1.11ns |
| X4: Years in the service | 0.06 | 2.58** |
| X5: BDRRM budget | 0.000003 | 1.81+ |
| X6: Experience in floods | 0.04 | 5.07** |
| X7: Experience in heavy rainfall | 0.01 | 2.57** |
| Constant: -4.01 | | |

| Initial MLRA | Final MLRA |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Adjusted R2: 0.22 F value: 7.17** | Adjusted R2: 0.23 F value: 9.82** |
| FINAL MODEL: $\hat{y} = -2.84 + 0.67X1 + 0.06X4 + 0.000003X5 + 0.03X6 + 0.01X7$ | |

Legend: • Regression coefficients generated at the Initial MLRA

ns not significant ($\square \geq 0.10$) ** highly significant ($\square \square 0.01$)
* significant ($0.01 < \square \square 0.05$) + significant ($0.05 < \square < 0.10$)

Key Issues and Governance Implications

Qualitative findings from focus group discussions contextualize the quantitative results and reveal governance constraints affecting disaster rehabilitation and recovery. Participants identified relocation of residents in flood-prone areas as a persistent challenge, particularly where Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) protections intersect with disaster safety mandates. This highlights the need for rights-sensitive yet risk-informed relocation strategies.

Environmental governance concerns were also raised, notably soil erosion linked to upland agricultural plantations and inadequate enforcement of buffer zone regulations, both of which were perceived as exacerbating downstream flooding. In addition, barangay leaders emphasized the lack of technical capacity to prepare infrastructure project proposals, limiting access to external funding for priority recovery interventions.

These issues indicate that limitations in BDRRMC performance stem not only from internal capacity gaps but also from broader legal, environmental, and inter-institutional constraints. Strengthening disaster rehabilitation and recovery, therefore, requires integrated governance reforms that combine leadership development, predictable financing, technical assistance, and stronger accountability mechanisms across government and private stakeholders.

Synthesis

Overall, the findings affirm that disaster rehabilitation and recovery at the barangay level are fundamentally governance challenges. While BDRRMCs demonstrate competence in immediate coordination tasks, weaknesses in resource mobilization and long-term recovery planning constrain resilience building. Enhancing recovery outcomes in climate-exposed river basin communities requires targeted investments in leadership

capacity, institutional support, and adaptive learning systems that enable barangays to translate statutory mandates into sustained recovery action.

Conclusion

This study examined the performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) in disaster rehabilitation and recovery within the Tagoloan River Basin, a climate-exposed river system in Southern Philippines. Findings indicate that while BDRRMCs generally demonstrate a satisfactory level of performance, effectiveness varies across mandated recovery functions.

Barangays perform more consistently in coordination, reporting, and peace and order functions, reflecting strong vertical linkages with municipal governments during the immediate post-disaster phase. However, limitations persist in resource mobilization, post-disaster needs assessment, and long-term recovery planning. These gaps indicate partial realization of Republic Act 10121's rehabilitation and recovery mandates and point to systemic constraints in leadership capacity, technical competence, and financing.

Regression results confirm that leadership attributes of the Punong Barangay, particularly educational attainment and years of service, significantly influence recovery performance, alongside budget availability and cumulative experience with climate-related hazards. Qualitative findings further reveal governance challenges related to relocation policy tensions, environmental regulation enforcement, and limited technical capacity for recovery-oriented project development. Collectively, these results affirm that disaster rehabilitation and recovery at the barangay level are fundamentally governance challenges requiring institutional strengthening rather than procedural compliance alone.

Recommendations

1. Institutionalize Leadership Development for Disaster Recovery Governance (*SDG 16*)

Barangay-level leadership development programs should be institutionalized to strengthen the capacity of Punong Barangays and BDRRMC members in recovery planning, policy interpretation, coordination, and accountability. Strengthening leadership and institutional competence directly contributes to more effective, transparent, and accountable local institutions, consistent with the

governance objectives of SDG 16.

2. Strengthen Technical Capacity for Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and Recovery Planning (*SDG 11; SDG 13*)

Municipal and city DRRM offices should provide sustained technical assistance to barangays in conducting post-disaster needs assessments and in formulating recovery-oriented infrastructure and risk-reduction projects. Enhancing technical capacity supports safer, more resilient communities (SDG 11) while enabling adaptive responses to climate-related hazards (SDG 13).

3. Ensure Predictable and Accountable Financing for Rehabilitation and Recovery (*SDG 11; SDG 16*)

Clear guidelines and monitoring mechanisms should be reinforced to ensure effective and transparent utilization of the Barangay DRRM Fund for rehabilitation and recovery. Predictable financing enables barangays to implement recovery measures that protect lives and livelihoods (SDG 11) while strengthening fiscal accountability and institutional trust (SDG 16).

4. Institutionalize Learning from Recurrent Climate Hazards (*SDG 13*)

Barangays should establish mechanisms to document and integrate lessons from recurring flood and rainfall events into DRRM planning and decision-making. Institutionalizing experiential learning enhances adaptive capacity and supports climate action at the community level, directly advancing SDG 13.

5. Enhance Multi-Level and Cross-Sectoral Governance in River Basin Settings (*SDG 11; SDG 16*)

Disaster rehabilitation and recovery in river basin communities require coordinated action among barangays, higher LGUs, national agencies, and private sector actors. Strengthening enforcement of environmental regulations and aligning disaster safety measures with legal and cultural safeguards can reduce systemic risk, promote resilient settlements (SDG 11), and reinforce effective, inclusive institutions (SDG 16).

Synthesis Statement on SDG Contribution

Overall, the study demonstrates that strengthening barangay disaster rehabilitation and recovery simultaneously contributes to safer, more resilient communities (SDG 11), enhanced adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards (SDG 13), and more effective, accountable local governance

institutions (SDG 16). By grounding global development goals in the empirical realities of barangay-level governance, the findings offer policy-relevant insights for disaster-prone river basin communities in the Philippines and similar contexts.

To Future Researchers

Future studies may examine the implementation of Republic Act 10121 by analyzing the effectiveness of coordination between national government agencies and local government units (LGUs). Such research can assess whether the DRRM framework is not only compliant with statutory mandates but also effectively enforced across governance levels. Further inquiry into the functionality of Local DRRM Councils, particularly their capacity to coordinate, mobilize resources, and implement the four DRRM thematic areas, would be valuable. Comparative studies across provinces, cities, and river basin contexts may also help explain variations in local disaster governance performance.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on the performance of Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees (BDRRMCs) in the Tagoloan River Basin, specifically examining the rehabilitation and recovery pillar of DRRM. The analysis was limited to recurrent hazards in the study area on floods, heavy rainfall, and unseasonal rain, and to respondents directly involved in barangay-level DRRM operations. Higher-level LGUs were excluded, as the management of the 5% Barangay DRRM Fund falls under the barangays' legal mandate. Accordingly, the findings are contextualized within the basin for barangay-level recovery governance.

Acknowledgments

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