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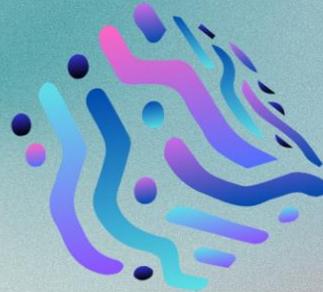
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Editor's Introduction

The dynamic world of Intersecta Minds Journal, a scholarly hub committed to intellectual exploration and the advancement of knowledge across the realms of Social Science, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management, and Education. In expressing our gratitude for your continued support, we invite you to delve into the distinctive scopes and aims that define our journal. Thank You to Authors, we extend our sincere appreciation to the authors whose rigorous contributions enrich the diverse landscape of Intersecta Minds Journal. Your commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship forms the essence of our vibrant academic community. Thank You to Readers, to our esteemed readers, thank you for choosing Intersecta Minds as your source of knowledge and inspiration. Your engagement and curiosity fuel the transformative power of scholarly dialogue, and we invite you to immerse yourselves in the rich and thought-provoking content that awaits. Thank You to Pre-Reviewers, a special acknowledgment goes to our diligent pre-reviewers. Your meticulous assessments ensure the scholarly excellence that characterizes Intersecta Minds Journal. Your dedication significantly contributes to the high standards we uphold. Scopes and aims of Intersecta Minds Journal is not just a publication; it is a dynamic platform with specific focuses that guide our commitment to excellence.

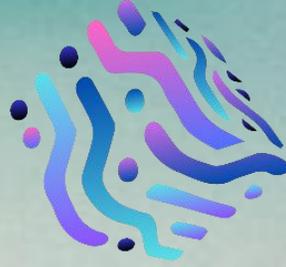
Intersecta Minds Journal is a collaborative endeavor, and we invite you to be part of this intellectual exploration. As we delve into specific areas of interest, we anticipate a continuing exchange of ideas, insights, and discoveries that will shape the future discourse.

Thank you for being an integral part of Intersecta Minds Journal. Your contributions, engagement, and intellectual curiosity are the cornerstones of our thriving community.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pensri Bangbon'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P'.

Asst.Prof.Dr. Pensri Bangbon
Editor-in-Chief
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Solutions to Improve the Quality of Professional Internship Central Area Tour for Vietnamese Studies Tourism Specialized Students, Department of Linguistics and Literature, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education

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Original Research Articles

Solutions to Improve the Quality of Professional Internship Central Area Tour for Vietnamese Studies Tourism Specialized Students, Department of Linguistics and Literature, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education

**Nguyen Thanh Trung^{1*}, Nguyen Thi Dieu Hien², Chung Le Khang³,
Nguyen Anh Ngoc⁴, Tran Thi Tuyet Suong⁵, & Ngo Thi Thanh Tam⁶**

Abstract

This article utilizes the outcome-based approach and development orientation to explore solutions for improving the quality of internship programs for Vietnamese Studies students majoring in Tourism at the Department of Linguistics and Literature (DLL), Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE). The research employs a combination of document synthesis and practical survey methods. The research findings indicate that three factors significantly influence the quality of student internships: (1) organizational planning, (2) supervision and support, and (3) partner organizations. Additionally, the study highlights the unique characteristics of HCMUE and the Department of Linguistics and Literature, which contribute to the distinctiveness of the internship program. The research outcomes can be applied to clarify the PDCA cycle in organizing internships for Vietnamese Studies students, enhance the current quality of organization, and be utilized to improve the training quality at the Faculty of Linguistics and Literature, HCMUE.

Keywords: Internship Program; Vietnamese Studies; Tourism; Quality Improvement

Introduction

In undergraduate education programs, internships are crucial in enhancing knowledge, developing professional skills and attitudes, acquiring practical knowledge, and gaining experience in a working environment. However, there is always a certain gap between theory taught in universities and practice in internship organizations. For most types of training, the internship process depends entirely on the supervising unit, and the training institution only

participates in supervising a part or indirectly. However, for the Tourism major, which belongs to the Vietnamese Studies program offered by the Faculty of Linguistics and Literature (DLL) at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE), the on-tour internship process is managed, supervised, and evaluated by both the training institution and the internship unit (tourism company). This creates the basis for a more realistic and effective assessment. Besides, the Decision approving the Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy to 2030 clearly states the requirement to improve the quality of training - following the orientation of "Strengthening the capacity of training institutions, high-quality tourism training schools in key tourism development regions." (Prime Minister, 2020). Therefore, this article aims to identify what factors affect the effectiveness of on-tour internships for tourism students; what the noteworthy aspects of the current internship situation for DLL's tourism students at HCMUE are, and how we improve the effectiveness of internships for this group of students.

Hence, the research subjects of this article are the internship process of 177 Vietnamese students majoring in Tourism from DLL, HCMUE from February 24, 2024, to March 3, 2024. The content and space of the research are internships, exploring the reality of routes, tourism business, and services through some typical tourist destinations in the Central and Central Highlands regions (Lam Dong, Khanh Hoa, Phu Yen, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, Quang Nam, Da Nang, Thua Thien Hue, Quang Tri, Quang Binh). Specifically, the three internship contents of the students include: (1) Infiltrating and exploring the reality of culture, geography, and tourism in the internship area (studying the basic characteristics of history, geography, culture, and customs of the locality, a preliminary survey of the tourism operation situation of the locality). (2) Visiting and practicing tour guide business (preparing and practicing commentary, introducing tourist attractions, interacting with customers, solving situations on tour, designing tours; collecting and extracting cultural heritage at the locality, tourist attractions, games, forms of interaction with customers necessary for the commentary on tourist attractions and the work of tour operation). (3) Writing a report (identifying the research problem, specific content, clear ideas, showing maturity and openness in the perception of a problem or a situation of tourism culture; presented in the correct format).

To assess the current situation, identify factors affecting the internship process on tours, and propose solutions to improve the quality of professional internships on tours in the Central – Highland's region of Vietnam for tourism students, the following research questions are proposed:

Research Question 1: What are the requirements for an effective internship program for tourism students?

Research Question 2: What are the criteria for evaluating a reputable internship company for tourism students?

Research Question 3: What are the solutions to strengthen the management and supervision of the internship process?

Research Question 4: What support activities are needed to help students achieve the best results during their internship?

Literature Review

To address the research questions, this paper focuses on three groups of factors that potentially affect the internship process on tour and considers them as three hypotheses to be tested through a survey. The three groups of research hypotheses are related to the internship program, the quality of the partner (tourism company), and the supervision of the training unit.

The internship program has a decisive role in the internship process

The program and content of the internship are key factors that affect the internship process of students on tour, and this factor must be evaluated by the students themselves. Moustafa A. Mekawy and Moustafa M. Abu Bakr, in *Planning Internship programs: Tourism students' Perceptions* (2014), analyzed "how tourism students' perceptions can be used to develop successful industry-based internship (IBI) programs." (p.41). Nguyen Thi Hai Ha and Nguyen Thi Tuyet Chinh, in their paper – *Effective Internship Program for Accounting Students* (2016), also affirmed the significance of internship programs and proposed a three-stage model: orientation and basic skills training, software practice, and direct internship. This means that the content of the internship is crucial to its success. However, it also means that the content must be attractive to the interns, who are students. However the needs of students can be attracted by many other factors, so this process needs to be adjusted accordingly. Nguyen Thi Thu Hang, in her paper – *Building a Practical Internship Activity Plan to Meet Output Standards* (2017), proposed solutions based on the principles of ensuring objectivity, systematicity, feasibility, and effectiveness. She stated that "there are many approaches to improving the effectiveness of managing students' internship activities in universities, of which the output standard approach (which is essentially a competency approach) is an inevitable trend of the modern teaching and learning process and brings high efficiency, which is applied by higher education institutions in the field of educational management." (p. 166). The output standard approach, therefore, serves as the guiding principle for this research paper.

The Quality of Internship Partners in Improving the Quality of Student Internships

For an internship program to achieve optimal effectiveness, there needs to be close cooperation between the school and the internship units, including tourism companies and businesses. Nguyen Thi Hai Ha and Nguyen Thi Tuyet Chinh (2016) in their study on *Effective Internship Programs for Accounting Students* emphasized the importance of selecting internship

partners. According to the authors, the school needs “to pay attention to the selection of partners and collect feedback from students on the quality of services after each internship term” (Ha, & Chinh, 2016: 92). Do Thi Thanh Toan (2018) also agrees and emphasizes the role of *University-Enterprise Linkages In Improving The Quality Of Training*. The author proposes effective cooperation methods in areas such as training, research, program development, and development support. More specifically, Ngo Phuong Thuy and Le Thi Ngoc in their study – *Enhancing the Effectiveness of Cooperation between Universities and Tourism Enterprises in Internship Activities for Students of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Thanh Hoa University of Culture, Sports and Tourism* (2023) identified the following requirements for businesses participating in the internship program. Businesses must develop a professional internship program, actively participate in consultations for program development, establish a cooperation mechanism and roadmap, provide infrastructure and facilities, and create a comfortable working environment for students, etc. These opinions, in combination with the survey results and practical experiences, have helped us to generalize the factor of partner quality in improving the quality of student internships.

Supervision and support from lecturers (training units) have a significant impact on the quality of internships

After building a good program and cooperating with high-quality partners, training units need to monitor, evaluate, revise, and develop the program as well as the internship process. Nguyen Thi Thu Hang in *Building an Internship Practice Plan to meet output standards* (2017) recommended that training units need to “Organize and direct internship activities according to a process that is appropriate for the development of professional skills of students in the education management major” (Hang, 2017: 166). Nguyen Thi Hai Ha and Nguyen Thi Tuyet Chinh in *Effective Internship Program for Accounting Students* (2016) also emphasized the role of lecturers – “With the enthusiastic support of a team of experienced lecturers, adequate facilities and rich resources of the centers, students can access the practice more easily, overcoming inherent difficulties from the issue of information and data security at enterprises when receiving accounting internships” (Ha, & Chinh, 2016: 92). Nga Thi Vo, Linh Hoang Phuong Le, and Van Thi Thanh Lam, in *Challenges for Student Satisfaction of Internship Program in Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Vietnam* (2022), shared this idea and point out – “To carry out this objective successfully, educators and organizations should not only improve practical and thorough courses for training but also need to continuously support students with the challenges they have to face in working environment and build in the skills and psychology to prepare themselves better for a satisfactory career internship.” (Vo, Le, & Lam, 2022: 1325). Expanding on this idea, Ngo Phuong Thuy and Le Thi Ngoc in *Enhancing the Effectiveness of Cooperation between Universities and Tourism Enterprises in Internship Activities for Students of Tourism and Hospitality Management*

at Thanh Hoa University of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2023) proposed several solutions for training units, including building a network of businesses, developing criteria for selecting businesses, raising awareness through propaganda and practical programs, creating conditions for businesses to participate in program development and feedback, organizing career guidance and creating job opportunities. These opinions are also the basis for evaluating and adjusting the participation of training units in improving the internship quality of tourism students at DLL, HCMUE.

Objective

To assess the current situation, identify factors affecting the internship process on tours, and propose solutions to improve the quality of professional internships on tours in the Central – Highland’s region of Vietnam for tourism students.

Materials and Methods

Based on the research object and objectives, this article is conducted based on the outcome-based approach. The outcome-based approach focuses on identifying and ensuring the learning outcomes of learners at the center, focusing on what learners need to know and can do after completing the training program. This principle governs all stages such as identifying learning outcomes, and designing the training program including content, teaching methods, and assessment in this article. Specifically, this study is based on the learning outcomes of the Internship modules 1 and 2 of DLL, HCMUE for Vietnamese studies, majoring in tourism. (Analyze and evaluate the tour guide business activities in the internship program through comparing the learned knowledge and the business activities of the tour guide. CLO2: Utilizing and analyzing the equipment and technical devices in the practical program (such as means of transportation, equipment of accommodation facilities, supporting technical devices, etc.) for the purpose of tour guiding. (Chung Le Khang, 2022, 2-3). Analyze the tourism services and activities included in the internship program. Analyze and evaluate the tour guiding activities in the internship program by comparing the knowledge learned with the tour guide's work. Evaluate the characteristics of tour guiding, tourism services, and travel agency activities. Use and analyze the equipment and technical means available in the internship program (such as means of transportation, equipment of accommodation facilities, supporting technical equipment...) for tour guiding. (Ngo Thi Thanh Tam, Nguyen Anh Ngoc, 2022, 4)).

Next, this study is conducted on the development orientation as a principle to ensure the direction of enhancing capacity and expanding the capabilities of people, systems, and organizations. This methodology aims to solve practical problems and promote sustainable development in many different fields. In this article, we consider learners as the center of the development process and aim to improve their capacity, knowledge, and skills by examining issues from multiple perspectives, including economic, social, environmental, and cultural. Accordingly, stakeholders including learners, teachers, internship partners, etc. are encouraged

to participate in the research and development process to ensure relevance, effectiveness, and the search for sustainable tourism solutions.

Based on the output-based approach and development, the literature/theory synthesis method is applied in the first stage of the study to collect, analyze, and synthesize information from various sources (books, newspapers, scientific articles, etc.) related to the research topic to create a comprehensive picture of the research topic and to identify gaps in existing knowledge and propose directions for further research. Developed long ago and quite popular, this method has been applied in typical studies such as Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), which explained how scientists synthesize information and knowledge in the research process. Glass, G. V., McGaw, B., & Smith, M. L. in *Meta-analysis in Social Research* (1981) used 7 chapters to introduce the method of literature synthesis, identify and select studies for synthesis, assess the quality of studies, code data, statistical analysis, etc. In this article, the literature synthesis method is used to identify the research topic and research questions, search and collect literature related to the research topic, assess the quality of the collected literature, analyze and synthesize information from the collected literature, and write a literature synthesis report. Accordingly, the literature synthesis method has provided this article with a comprehensive picture of the research topic, identified gaps in existing knowledge, and proposed directions for further research.

To verify, update, and develop theory, the survey method has been used and shown to be remarkably effective since ancient times. Pierre Bourdieu, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), linked the survey method and structuralism to study behavior and meaning in specific social contexts. This method combines different data collection techniques, including interviews and observation. First, interviews are used as a data collection technique (knowledge, emotions, behavior) by asking questions and recording the answers of the interviewee. In this paper, we use structured interviews with a fixed set of questions and unstructured interviews - direct conversations with students about their internship. Second, the observation method is used to collect information about the research object through direct observation with participation in the activities of 158 students by recording audio and video on the internship line. The questions were sent to students through two forms, a Google form, and a face-to-face interview, and were structured according to the following table:

Table 1 Four Categories of Survey and Interview Questions

Group of Questions 1	Evaluation of the internship program					
Questionnaire content	Duration	Accommodation	Tourist sites	Requirements	Experiential exercise	Gala dinner
Group of Questions 2	Evaluation of tourism service quality					
Questionnaire content	Transportation	Foodservice	Accommodation service	Sightseeing, shopping services	Health services	Other services
	Driver's attitude		Tour guide's support		Medical staff's support	Support from the executive team
Group of Questions 3	Evaluation of support activities from the training unit					
Questionnaire content	HCMUE's support	Faculty's pre-trip support	Lecturers' supervision	Lecturers' comments	Solving problems	
Group of Questions 4	Open comments on the corresponding contents					
Questionnaire content	Overall assessment	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Next internship expectation	Gender; Course	Internship unit (vehicle number)

Based on the research orientations, methods, subjects, questions, and hypotheses, this article is designed based on the following model:

Table 2 Research model

Research hypothesis	Research approach	Methodology	Research content	Contribution	Purposes
H1. Program Content	Approaching Output Standards Approaching Development	Literature Synthesis Practical Survey	Evaluation and Content Proposal	Clarifying Influential Factors from Internal and External Perspectives	Evaluate the status quo.
H2. Quality of Partner Travel Agencies			Evaluation and Proposal for Partner Quality Improvement	Enhancing Internship Effectiveness	Identify influencing factors.
H3. Lecturers' Management, Supervision, and Support			Evaluation and Proposal for the Management Unit	Summarizing Research and Introducing It in Program Implementation and Development	Propose solutions

Results

Program

After the online interview round and online survey (180 minutes per vehicle), 139 responses were recorded with the following statistical results for the program:

Table 3 Evaluation of the Student Internship Program

	Very inappropriate	Inappropriate	Normal	Appropriate	Very appropriate
Duration	4	8	42	63	22
Accommodation	6	9	58	52	14
Tourist sites	3	22	46	52	16
Requirements	2	4	45	60	28

	Very inappropriate	Inappropriate	Normal	Appropriate	Very appropriate
Experiential exercises	1	1	30	71	36
Gala dinner	0	3	30	71	51

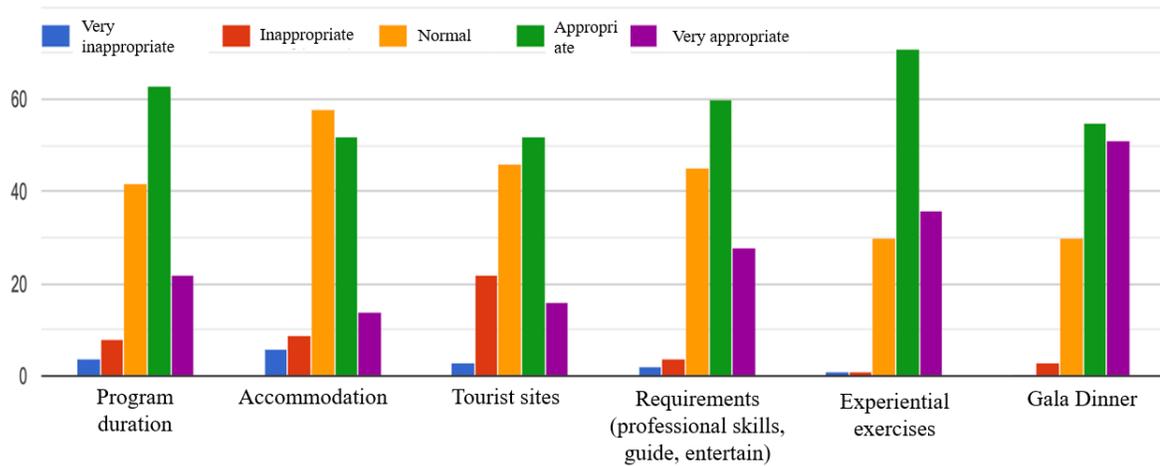


Figure 1 Student Internship Program Evaluation Results

Overall, the students were satisfied with the content of the internship program. Most of the criteria were rated as "Appropriate" and "Very Appropriate". The highest-rated criteria were "Experiential Activities" and "Gala Dinner" (77% and 88% of students rated them as appropriate or above). This indicates that the students valued the opportunity to participate in practical activities during the internship program. In particular, the Gala Dinner, which was organized and planned by the students themselves, left a deep impression with the candlelight ceremony, sharing of thoughts, and other activities that were highly appreciated by the students. The criteria of "Accommodation" and "Tourist Sites" were rated lower, with 11% and 18% of students rating them as inappropriate or below. This means that the actual program and accommodation need to be considered more from the student's perspective. This is more evident in Chart 1, where the "Accommodation" criterion has a different shape with a higher "Normal" ratio than "Appropriate". Therefore, it can be seen that the internship program is designed in line with the training objectives of the tourism industry and meets the needs of the students; however, the accommodation could be improved.

Tourist services (Tourist company)

In September 2023, the department initiated the internship program and invited bids from travel agencies. Applications were received and evaluated through a bidding process. Viet Media Travel Corporation won the bid with its strong profile, which demonstrated a focus on investing in service quality and human resource development to ensure stable services for tourists. The company also has experience collaborating with universities and tourism departments to guide students during their studies. The success of the Gala dinner, which was directly supported by Viet Media Travel Corporation in many aspects, further confirmed their capabilities. A survey of 139 students showed that the majority were satisfied with the travel services provided. Specifically, 70% were satisfied with transportation, food, and accommodation; 65% were satisfied with sightseeing and shopping; 63% were satisfied with medical services; and 69% were satisfied with other services. However, there are still areas for improvement. For example, 18% of students were dissatisfied with transportation, 26% were dissatisfied with food and beverage, and 17% were dissatisfied with sightseeing and shopping.

Table 4 Evaluation of Student Satisfaction with Tourism Services

	Very inappropriate	Inappropriate	Normal	Appropriate	Very appropriate
Transportation	18	20	28	40	33
Foodservice	7	26	46	45	15
Accommodation service	4	17	60	46	12
Sightseeing, shopping services	2	9	58	53	17
Health services	1	19	57	62	0
Other services	6	14	41	51	27

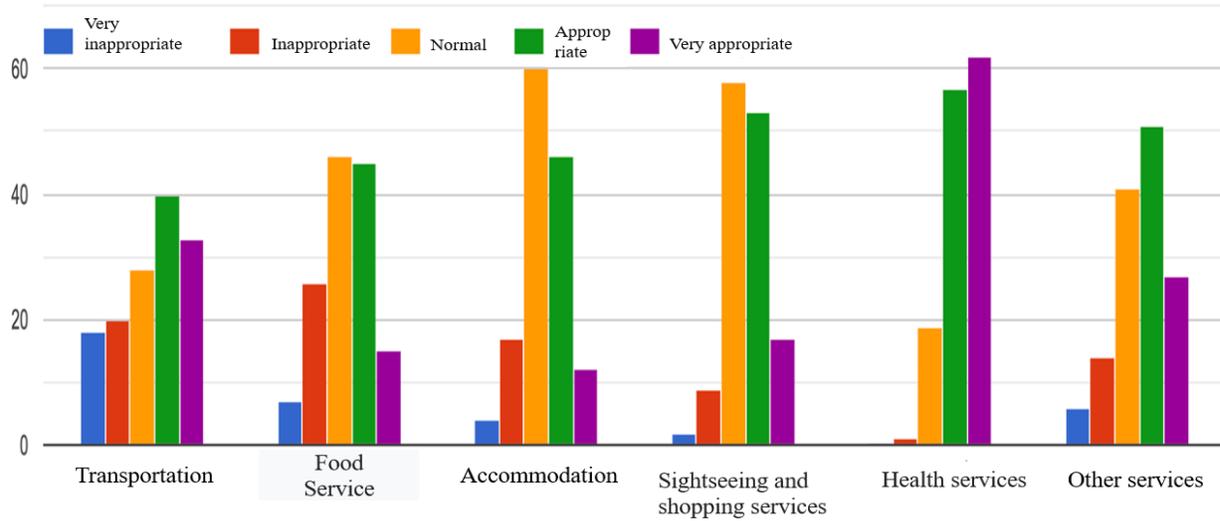


Figure 2 valuation of Tourism Service Quality by Students

Observations from the service quality evaluation chart show that the evaluated criteria can be divided into three groups based on the rating trend: Group of Accommodation, catering, sightseeing, and shopping services received the highest rating, which is "Normal." Group transportation and other services were rated as "Appropriate." The group of healthcare services received the highest proportion of "Very Appropriate" ratings and no "Very Inappropriate" ratings. This is a reasonable result because the travel agency arranged for two doctors to accompany the group and promptly resolved any health issues that arose for the members.

Supervisory Support from the Training Unit

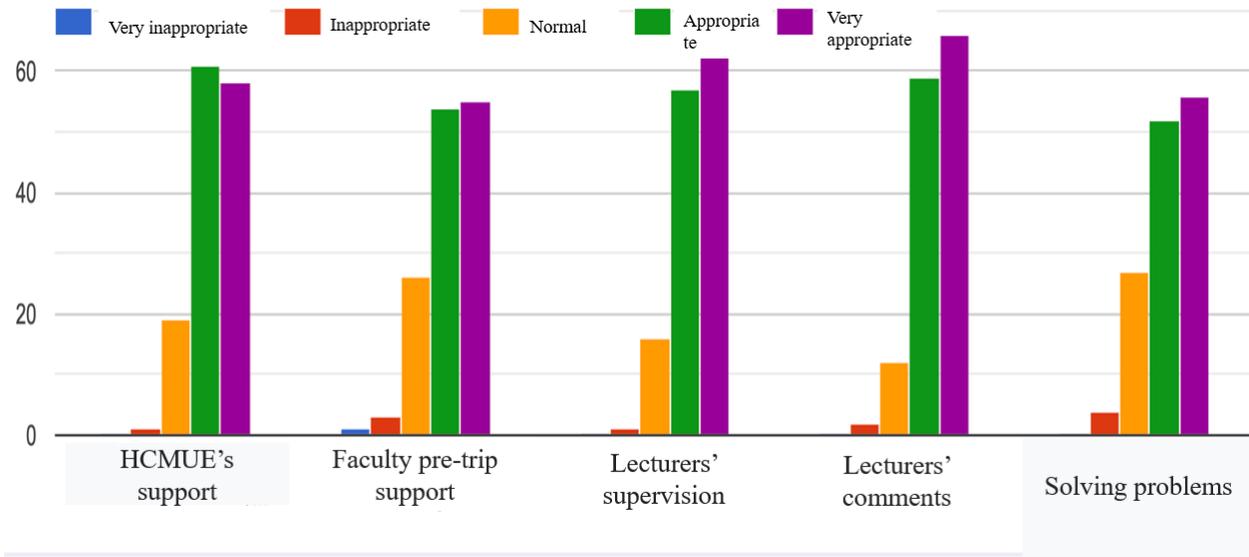


Figure 3 Evaluation of Student Support Activities from the Training Unit

Six lecturers from the DLL were assigned to accompany the delegation to implement the program and coordinate in guiding the students' professional activities, including checking and preparing all the services that the delegation would use, supporting special cases, checking and managing the delegation (people and luggage) during the tour, conducting customer care activities. Being responsible for managing, supervising, supporting, and evaluating the students' attitude, adaptability, internship reports, presentations, and collected materials. The survey chart showed that the support activities from the training unit were highly appreciated. In general, the indicators for the support of HCMUE, DLL, the supervision, comments, and handling of situations by the lecturers were mostly rated as very suitable and suitable. The answers to the interview and open-ended questions of the survey also highly appreciated the training unit's monitoring, comments, and support for the students. This is a good sign for the personnel organization in the internship of tourism students at DLL, HCMUE.

Discussion

Firstly, the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle is used in the DLL's tourism internship program for Vietnamese students. This ensures that the program meets the required standards and helps students develop their skills. In the planning stage, the overall goal is to improve students' professional skills and practical knowledge. Specific goals include enabling students to perform

basic tasks in the tourism industry, communicate effectively with customers, work in teams, and solve problems. Based on these goals, the internship program is designed to last 10 days and 9 nights, from January to February each year. This corresponds to the beginning of the second semester of the third and fourth year of the program and is also the low season for summer tourism. The internship takes place in 11 provinces in the Central and Central Highlands regions of Vietnam, which are popular tourist destinations for both domestic and international visitors. Partner tourism businesses are selected through a bidding process, with a contract value of up to 1.4 billion VND. The selection criteria include quality, bid price, and other factors. The department and the partner develop a detailed internship program that includes activities, schedules, assessment rubrics, contract implementation, internship diaries, and internship report guidelines. In the implementation stage, the instructor guides students on how to implement the internship program, answers their questions, and provides support throughout the internship. The instructor also supervises and regularly assesses the students' performance throughout the Central region. In the checking stage, the students self-assess their internship results, and the instructor and the business jointly assess the students' internship results based on the pre-determined criteria. These results are collected, analyzed, and compared to form the final assessment result. Finally, based on the assessment results and feedback, the department updates and improves the internship program to improve its effectiveness and to meet the needs of businesses and the tourism market. This process helps to improve the quality of the internship program, helps students achieve their internship goals, strengthens the cooperative relationship between the school and businesses, and enhances students' competitiveness in the labor market.

Secondly, in addition to the overall efficiency, the survey results indicate that the transportation and other services indicators of the tourism company differ in nature from the other criteria. Specifically, this indicator pertains to the drivers' attitude and other support from the operational management, which is evaluated with a notable sign when the support and non-support rates are quite similar.

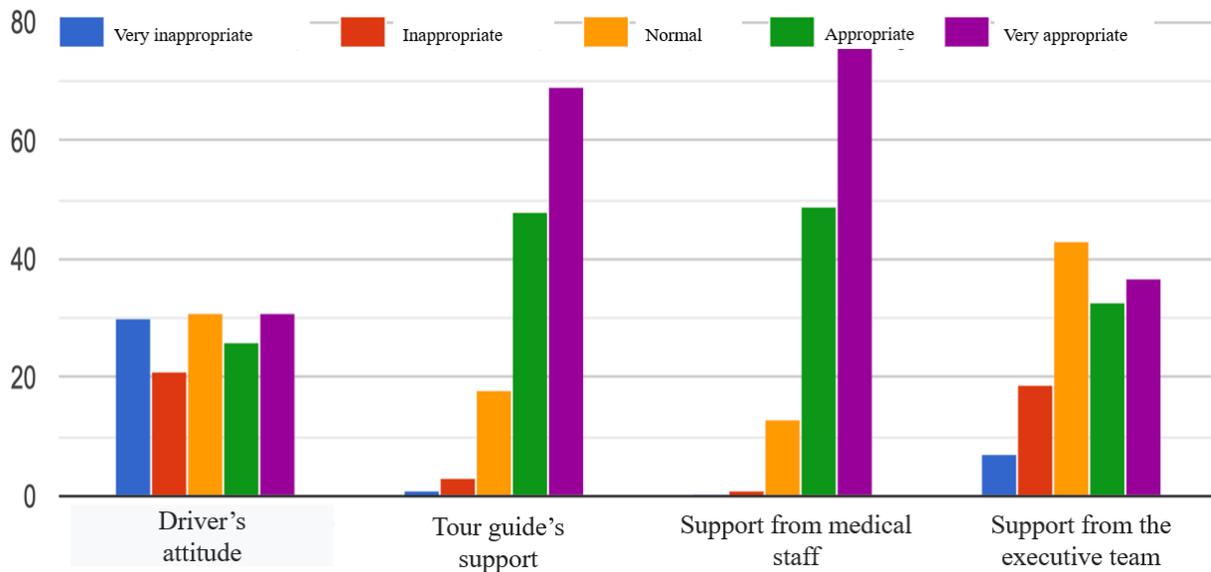


Figure 4 Evaluation of Student Support Activities by Travel Agencies

Drivers and tour guides play a crucial role in the overall success of a tour and the internship experience for students. This is because they have direct contact with customers and students. While tour guides are trained and managed directly by the tour operator (usually accompanying large groups), drivers are often outsourced. Although they meet the requirements for passenger transportation, they often lack the knowledge and skills necessary for providing quality service. During internship tours, there have been cases of drivers not cooperating with student groups directly serving on the route. The driver is solely responsible for managing the air conditioning, sound system, and presentation equipment on the vehicle. Student interns who receive enthusiastic support from the driver will achieve significantly better results. The issue at hand is that the tour company needs to focus on training both hard skills and soft skills for its service staff, especially drivers. This is essential for improving the service culture of the tourism industry, building a civilized and sustainable tourism environment, meeting the expectations of tourists, and raising the awareness and behavior of tourism professionals.

Thirdly, as a major department of HCMUE - the leading pedagogical university in the South, DLL has a tradition and strength in training undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students in the fields of literature, and philology pedagogy. Therefore, in addition to the system of knowledge, skills, and attitudes corresponding to the profession, students majoring in tourism (Vietnamese Studies) at DLL also possess some specialized knowledge and skills, contributing to

creating the identity of students majoring in tourism at DLL, HCMUE. First, the system of specialized knowledge in literature, Chinese and Nom characters, etc. helps students can synthesize and introduce information related to literature and cultural studies. The difference in the student's presentation on the tour is reflected in the ability to lead poetry and tell legends and stories related to the tourist destination, such as Da Dia Reef, the theme of Xuan Dieu's poetry in Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh; Han Mac Tu in Tuy Hoa effectively and attractively. In particular, the skills of analyzing Chinese and Nom characters have helped students confidently explain at religious sites such as Truc Lam Zen Monastery in Da Lat, Linh Ung Pagoda in Ngu Hanh Son, etc.

Aiming to improve the quality of internship organization for Vietnamese students majoring in Tourism at DLL, HCMUE, the internship program should focus on sustainable tourism in terms of resources, environment, climate change, and national defense and security. Specifically, from an economic perspective, the program content can be oriented towards introducing and encouraging tourists to buy local specialties such as Da Lat strawberries, Ly Son garlic, coconut handicrafts in Binh Dinh, Hoi An silk village, Hue lotus silk; preserving and promoting local culture, encouraging local experiences such as enjoying Tay Son Binh Dinh martial arts music, Hue singing on the Huong River, etc. promoting the protection of the marine environment along the Central Coast, educating the community to serve tourism by encouraging drinking coconut water with reed straws in Quy Nhon. Because cultural heritages can only be preserved and promoted when they are planned and connected to tourist routes. The spirit of sustainable tourism should also be included in the weight of the students' route presentation assessment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with the output-oriented and development approach, this paper applied two methods of literature synthesis and practical survey to clarify three factors affecting the quality of internship of tourism students (DLL, HCMUE) including program content, quality of partner travel agencies and management, supervision and support of lecturers. The survey results showed that the quality of internships can be improved through improving accommodation and transportation services; program content needs to focus on and implement the sustainable tourism development direction. Besides, students need to continue to promote their strengths absorbed from the training unit, at the same time, self-training soft skills, aiming to effectively participate in the task of fostering knowledge and skills for the community residents involved in the tourism business to preserve and promote heritage, and national culture.

In the future, this study can further develop the evaluation from stakeholders including lecturers, organizing partners, accommodation establishments, etc. to have a more comprehensive view than just focusing on the student's perception channel. In addition, facing the technological trend of Industry 4.0, improving the quality of organizing internship activities

for tourism students DLL, HCMUE needs to be associated with the task of applying software to manage activities and evaluate professional tasks; specifically, students can apply mobile applications to enrich the way of providing information at the point, schedule, services, etc. In the future, this study can be extended to the potential application of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to help students experience explaining famous landmarks before entering the official internship because this is the inevitable development trend in education and life.

Suggestions

Suggestions and Implementations

Based on the findings of this study, several key suggestions and implementations are proposed to improve the quality of professional internships for tourism students at the Department of Linguistics and Literature (DLL), Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE).

Enhancing Program Content and Student Experience

The results indicate that students highly value experiential learning activities, with Experiential Exercises and the Gala Dinner receiving the highest satisfaction ratings. To further enhance the program's effectiveness, the following recommendations are suggested: Increase hands-on activities, such as role-playing as tour guides, managing real tour groups, and handling unexpected travel situations. Expand student-led initiatives, including event planning and interactive learning experiences, to strengthen problem-solving and leadership skills. Improve accommodation quality and variety of tourist sites to enhance student satisfaction, as these aspects received comparatively lower ratings.

Strengthening Collaboration with Tourism Agencies

The collaboration with Viet Media Travel Corporation yielded positive feedback, particularly in areas like transportation, food services, and health support. However, some dissatisfaction was noted, particularly in transportation (18%) and food services (26%). To address this: Regular feedback sessions should be conducted with students and service providers to refine and adapt services. Increase the number of accommodation and food options to better align with student preferences. Improve transportation efficiency by considering student feedback regarding comfort, scheduling, and safety.

Expanding Faculty Supervision and Support

Faculty supervision was highly rated, demonstrating the effectiveness of direct academic guidance during internships. To build on this: Develop structured mentorship programs, where faculty members provide ongoing support, evaluations, and workshops before, during, and after

the internship. Utilize student performance tracking systems to ensure continuous improvement in adaptability, professional attitude, and report writing. Introduce peer mentoring, where senior students assist juniors in understanding fieldwork expectations and best practices.

Future Research and Technological Advancements

To maintain the relevance and competitiveness of the tourism internship program, future initiatives should align with emerging Industry 4.0 technologies. Key areas for development include: Implementing digital tools: Introducing mobile applications for internship management, including scheduling, service quality tracking, and student feedback collection. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR): Utilizing VR/AR simulations to allow students to experience historical landmarks, cultural sites, and guided tours before the actual internship. Expanding stakeholder involvement: Future studies should integrate lecturers, tourism agencies, accommodation providers, and tourists to gain a holistic understanding of internship effectiveness.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare no competing interests related to this study.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to all relevant ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. All participants provided informed consent before contributing to the study, ensuring their voluntary participation and confidentiality.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest to declare.

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Healthcare and Nutrition Amongst the Residents of Urban Slums Across India to Understand Inequalities in Urban for A Shift from Vulnerabilities to Resilience for a Sustainable Future

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Original Research Articles

Healthcare and Nutrition Amongst the Residents of Urban Slums Across India to Understand Inequalities in Urban for a Shift from Vulnerabilities to Resilience for a Sustainable Future

Dipti Mayee Sahoo¹, & Sneha Patnaik^{2*}

Abstract

Urbanization, a defining feature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, has significantly transformed human settlement patterns, yet its impacts on health and well-being remain insufficiently understood. This study explores the relationship between urbanization and health, particularly in low-income urban areas of developing countries, where rapid urban expansion has led to complex social, environmental, and health challenges. The research aims to analyze the interplay between urban planning, health determinants, and social and environmental policies, highlighting the necessity for an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to urban health. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The study population includes urban residents from selected low-income areas, with data collected through surveys, structured interviews, and secondary data analysis. The research tools include questionnaires assessing health conditions, environmental quality indicators, and policy evaluations. Statistical analysis, thematic coding, and policy impact assessments are employed to identify key trends and challenges associated with urban health.

The findings indicate that traditional sectoral approaches focused on remedial measures are insufficient to address contemporary urban health issues. While infectious diseases have declined in many urban areas, other health concerns, such as non-communicable diseases, environmental hazards, and socio-economic disparities, remain closely linked to urban living conditions. The study highlights the importance of shifting from conventional biomedical models to a holistic, ecological perspective that incorporates social determinants of health. In response to these challenges, the research advocates for coordinated interventions, such as the Healthy

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Cities initiative, to promote health and social development at the local level. Key barriers to effective implementation, including policy fragmentation and governance challenges, are discussed. Finally, the study emphasizes the need to move beyond a vulnerability-focused framework and instead adopt resilience-based strategies to enhance urban health outcomes in an increasingly urbanized world.

Keywords: Urban Health; Social policy; Environmental; Vulnerability; Resilience

Introduction

Urban regions are home to more than a billion people worldwide; by 2030, more than half of the world's population is projected to reside there. Many rural residents relocate to urban regions in pursuit of employment, better living conditions, and access to healthcare facilities. The study's primary objective is to collate the findings related to perceptions, knowledge, attitude, and practices from studies across the urban slums in India related to healthcare and nutrition. Urbanization, a characteristic of the twentieth century, is a profound transformation of human settlement processes and their outcomes, which has not been well understood in terms of both positive and negative impacts. The world became mainly urban in 2007. It is thus timely to review the state of knowledge about urban health and the current priorities for research and action. This article considers both health determinants and outcomes in low-income urban areas of developing countries. This paper argues that the interrelations between urban planning, health, social, and environmental policies have been poorly articulated until now. Although sectoral approaches have often applied remedial and corrective measures to overcome unsatisfactory conditions in urban areas, today we know that infectious diseases stemming from insanitary conditions are not the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Europe. Nonetheless diverse forms of ill health remain associated with place of work and residence. Therefore, in order to deal with the complexity and diversity of urban areas there is an urgent need to move from conventional, sectoral approaches based on biomedical models of health to coordinated action stemming from an ecological interpretation of health including its social determinants. This kind of approach is presented in order to promote health and social development at the local level. Thus, the need to study urban health in a multi-level and multi-sectoral way is highlighted and priorities for research are identified. Interventions such as the Healthy Cities project are considered and obstacles to the effective implementation of urban health programmes are discussed.

A systematic search of articles was conducted on the National Library of Medicine PubMed Portal Google Scholar, and J-Stor databases for published studies across the indexed journals. Academic social media sites like Academia.edu and Researchgate.org were also searched for grey literature. The inclusion criteria include studies conducted in Urban slums from 2010 to 2022, conducted amongst the Indian population within the Indian Geography, and focusing on documenting perceptions, knowledge, attitude, and practices. Exclusion criteria were cross-sectional surveys with quantitative questionnaires focusing on the prevalence of diseases and

the burden of risk factors, literature reviews, systematic reviews, frameworks for implementation of specific interventions, and experimental study designs.

A total of 18 qualitative observational studies were included in the review and the findings related to knowledge, attitudes, and practices identified from the literature were summarized. The literature indicated adequate knowledge about nutrition and healthcare, and the barriers towards transitioning knowledge to practice were related to lack of resources, priorities around employment and income, and the attitudes towards change-making were usually based on convenience to access cost of service and availability of the services.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into health-seeking behaviors, dietary patterns, and social determinants of health among the urban poor, the findings remain fragmented across different geographical and temporal contexts (Misra et al., 2017; Gaiha & Gillander Gådin, 2020; Gundewar & Chin, 2020). There is a critical need for an integrated approach to synthesize these insights and present a holistic understanding of healthcare perceptions and practices among India's urban poor. This study aims to consolidate evidence from diverse regions to identify common patterns and gaps, thereby informing future research and policy development (Das et al., 2018; Banerjee et al., 2021). The review recommends further investment in research to understand the perceptions, patterns of nutrition, and health-seeking behaviours. Also, there is a pressing need to use the evidence for developing policies in line with the expectations of poor urban communities.

Objective

To study the importance of shifting from conventional biomedical models to a holistic, ecological perspective that incorporates social determinants of health.

Literature Review

India is undergoing rapid urbanization, with nearly one-third of its population residing in cities. This urban shift is primarily driven by rural-to-urban migration, as individuals seek better employment opportunities, improved living conditions, and greater access to healthcare services. However, the rapid pace of urban expansion has led to a rise in urban poverty, particularly in informal settlements or slums. These areas often suffer from inadequate access to fundamental services such as clean water, sanitation, housing, and healthcare (Patra & Bandyopadhyay, 2020).

Urban Poverty and Its Dimensions

Urban poverty is a complex and multidimensional issue, extending beyond mere income deficiency. The Asian Development Bank (2014) defines urban poverty as encompassing vulnerabilities related to limited access to land, housing, infrastructure, economic opportunities, healthcare, and education. Urban poverty manifests in various forms, including health disparities,

lack of education, food insecurity, and economic instability. A key indicator of urban poverty is the proliferation of slums, where inadequate infrastructure forces residents to pay more for essential services such as water and electricity compared to those in better-serviced areas (ForumIAS, 2018).

Urban Poverty and Food Insecurity

Urban poverty significantly affects food security and nutritional well-being. A systematic review by Vilar-Compte et al. (2021) revealed that food insecurity among the urban poor leads to unhealthy dietary choices, increasing the risk of both chronic undernutrition and obesity. Psychosocial stress and social despair further contribute to obesity within these communities. Moreover, financial constraints often compel urban poor households to prioritize food over healthcare, exacerbating health risks (Joshi et al., 2019; Srivastava et al., 2009).

Healthcare Access and Health-Seeking Behavior

Several studies indicate a strong link between urban poverty, healthcare accessibility, and health outcomes. Research conducted by Joshi et al. (2019) in New Delhi found that food-insecure households were more likely to experience unmet healthcare needs due to financial barriers. Similarly, a study of urban slums in Lucknow highlighted how high out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures restrict medical access for the urban poor (Srivastava et al., 2009). A geospatial study in Dhaka, Bangladesh, found that 82% of healthcare providers in urban slums were private, 12% were public, and 6% were non-profit organizations (Adams et al., 2015). Many urban poor individuals opt for private healthcare despite its higher costs due to dissatisfaction with government healthcare services, a shortage of public healthcare facilities, and cultural affiliations with informal providers (E et al., 2021). Factors such as dignified treatment, home visit flexibility, and accessibility shape these preferences.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two theoretical models: the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) framework and the Health Belief Model (HBM). These frameworks provide valuable insights into the socio-economic conditions that shape health-seeking behaviors and access to healthcare among the urban poor.

Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Framework

The SDH framework emphasizes that health outcomes are influenced by broader social, economic, and environmental factors. Key determinants in the context of urban poverty include: Economic stability: Income levels directly impact healthcare accessibility and food security.

Healthcare access and quality: The availability, affordability, and efficiency of healthcare services determine utilization patterns. Neighborhood and built environment: Living conditions in slums contribute to heightened health risks. Education: Literacy and health awareness influence healthcare decision-making (Thandassery & Duggal, 2004).

Health Belief Model (HBM)

The HBM explains health-seeking behaviors based on individual perceptions of risks and barriers to accessing care. This model consists of six core constructs: Perceived susceptibility: Individuals' assessment of their likelihood of falling ill. Perceived severity: Understanding the potential consequences of a health condition. Perceived benefits: Belief in the effectiveness of preventive measures. Perceived barriers: Economic, social, and logistical obstacles to healthcare access. Cues to action: External triggers prompting individuals to seek healthcare services. Self-efficacy: Confidence in one's ability to seek and adhere to medical treatment (Caswell & Zuckerman, 2018).

By integrating the SDH framework and the HBM, this study aims to explore how economic conditions, environmental factors, and individual perceptions influence healthcare-seeking behaviors among India's urban poor. These insights will inform policy recommendations aimed at improving healthcare accessibility and overall well-being for vulnerable populations.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a systematic review methodology to synthesize existing research on health perceptions, health-seeking behaviors, and nutritional practices among the urban poor residing in Indian slums. The study integrates qualitative and mixed-methods research to provide an in-depth understanding of community experiences and behaviors.

Study Population

The target population includes individuals living in urban slums across India. Studies that document perceptions, behaviors, and practices related to health and nutrition within this demographic are included in the review.

Sample Groups and Selection Techniques

A systematic selection process was followed to identify relevant studies. The study sample includes peer-reviewed journal articles, grey literature, and qualitative/mixed-methods studies that meet the inclusion criteria. Boolean operators ("AND" and "OR") were used to refine search results and ensure relevance.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies conducted in urban slums from 2010 to 2022. Research focused on the Indian population within Indian geography. Studies that document perceptions and practices related to health and nutrition.

Exclusion Criteria

Cross-sectional surveys that focus solely on quantitative measures of disease prevalence and risk factors. Literature reviews, systematic reviews, and implementation frameworks. Experimental study designs.

Research Tools and Data Collection

A systematic search of academic databases, including the National Library of Medicine PubMed Portal, Google Scholar, and J-STOR, was conducted to identify relevant published studies. Additionally, academic social media platforms such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate.org were explored for grey literature. Keywords Used: "Urban poor," "slum population," "slums," "preventive health," "health perception," "health-seeking behavior," "health-seeking patterns," "nutritional practices," "nutrition," and "healthy eating." A PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flowchart was used to document the screening and selection process of relevant studies.

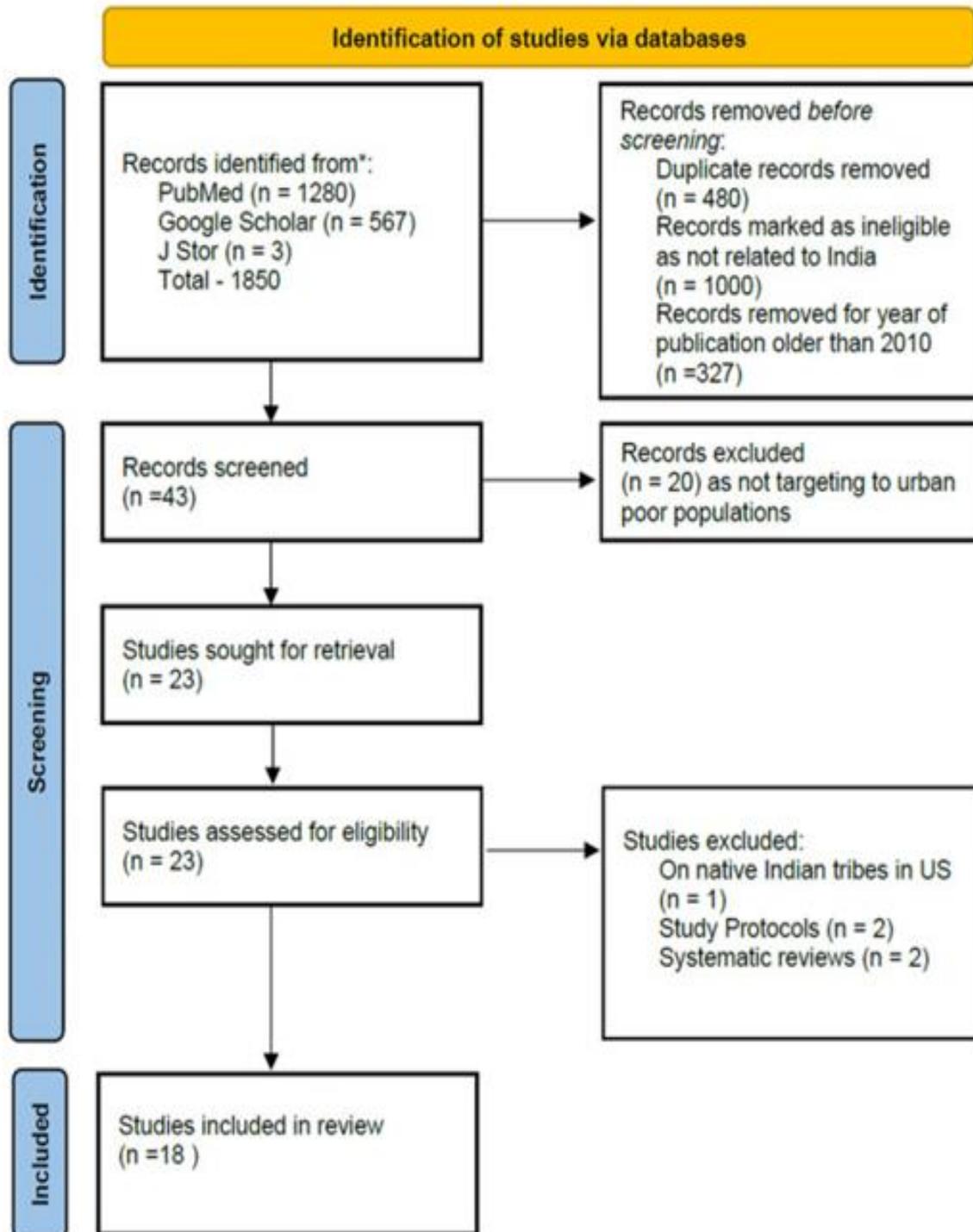


Figure 1 PRISMA flow chart of the literature review process

Research Procedures

1. Database Search & Screening

Initial search yielded 1,850 articles. Titles and abstracts were screened to exclude irrelevant studies, reducing the selection to 43 articles.

2. Full-Text Review

The 43 shortlisted articles were assessed in full by two independent researchers (AP and KP). 18 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final review. Exclusions: Two studies were excluded for not being conducted within Indian geography, two were duplicates, and 26 did not meet the inclusion criteria (quantitative-only studies, studies outside urban slums, and a study protocol).

Data Analysis Methods

A thematic analysis approach was used to synthesize findings from the reviewed studies. The data were categorized into three main themes: Knowledge of good health and nutrition. Practices related to healthcare-seeking and eating habits. Attitudes toward change-making. Under each category, findings were further stratified based on the socio-ecological model: Personal level (individual knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors). Interpersonal level (family and peer influences). Community level (community norms and support structures). Policy level (government initiatives and public health policies). A summary of the reviewed 18 articles is presented in Table 1, categorizing insights based on the socio-ecological model framework.

Table 1 Description of the studies categorizing insights based on the socio-ecological model framework**Description of the studies included in the literature review**

BPL: below poverty line; AWWs: Anganwadi Workers; NMs: nurse mentors; ASHA: Accredited Social Health Activist

Author	Geography Covered	Study Objective	Study Design	Target Population	Thematic Focus
Mahua Patra and Satarupa Bandyopadhyay [1]	Urban Slums of Kolkata	What are the determinants of the choice of type of hospital (Public or Private)? What are the determinants of seriousness about health care seeking (more or less)?	Cross-sectional study using a semi-structured interview	BPL and Non-BPL households	Quality of care, and competing priorities and health needs
Misra et al. [13]	Urban Slums of Delhi	Determine the awareness and health-seeking practices related to common eye conditions.	Cross-sectional study using a semi-structured interview	Individuals aged 18 to 60 years and residing in notified slums	Sustaining life and health
Gaiha and Gadin [14]	Urban Slums of Delhi	To explore barriers and opportunities to participate in	Cross-sectional study using a semi-structured	Heterosexual couples aged between 20 to 60	Sustaining life and health, and

This systematic review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the existing literature on health and nutrition perceptions among India's urban poor. By categorizing findings through a structured socio-ecological model, this study aims to inform policy interventions and community-based strategies for improving healthcare accessibility and nutritional outcomes in urban slum populations.

Results

The detailed characteristics of the studies included in presented in Table1.1. We classified the studies across the thematic areas. Three thematic areas were defined based on the broader themes that arise during the literature review.

Theme 1 was about sustaining life and health; focusing on personal and interpersonal levels of the socio-ecological model and concerning personal and family choices, answering why, how, and who makes the choices regarding health seeking. Theme 2 was about competing priorities and health needs; focused on the community level of the socio-ecological model and concerning how cultural norms shape health-seeking behaviour and nutritional behaviour. The third theme was on quality care; focused on the societal level of the socio-ecological model and concerning access, availability, and affordability of healthcare services.

Competing priorities and health needs were the most common themes 52% (n=9) indicating the literature was focused on health-seeking behaviour and nutritional practices of the target population. Sustaining life and health was the second common theme 41% (n=7) with a focus on choices related to health and nutrition. The theme of quality of care was least common with 29% (n=5) articles focusing on access, availability, and affordability of healthcare services. Geography-wise the studies were restricted to metro cities and major cities with Mumbai having covered by five studies, followed by Delhi, Kolkata, and Bengaluru each reporting four studies. Ahmedabad, Nagpur, and Kochi were other major towns wherein at least one study was conducted.

Knowledge of good health and nutrition

Knowledge of good health and nutrition referred to the knowledge of the respondents related to good practices like handwashing, use of toilets, clean drinking water, eating fresh fruits and green leafy vegetables, exercise, and physical activity and their impact on overall health status.

The study by Gaiha et al. focused on adolescents and their caregivers (parents) unfolded interesting insights into the knowledge related to a healthy diet [14]. All caregivers were having knowledge of high salt, high sugar, and high-fat food items were unhealthy. All the adolescents were also having the same knowledge that food containing high salt, and sugar fats increase weight, and causes acne. Another relevant finding was the caregivers were not having a clear understanding of a balanced diet or a nutritious diet. The general understanding amongst both adolescents and caregivers was food cooked at home is usually healthier than the one that is cooked outside.

A study conducted by Athavale et al. across the Mumbai slums amongst young mothers indicated clear knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding from healthcare providers, there was however conflicting information on family elders regarding exclusive breastfeeding (). The study also recorded the knowledge about hygiene and safe cooking practices which were found to be adequate as per national guidelines on young infant and child feeding practices.

Another study by Gaiha and Gadin (2020) explored the knowledge amongst young married couples on topics related to prevention, management, care, support, treatment, and rehabilitation: the questions were focused on food habits and nutrition; water, sanitation, and hygiene; physical activity; tobacco consumption, reproductive health (family planning methods); drug/alcohol abuse; Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS); mental illness; newborn health and heart disease. The source of knowledge for men was mass media, including radio, television, information, education, and communication (IEC) materials. For women, the source of knowledge was interpersonal communication (IPC) by elders, parents, relatives, school/children's school, peers, traditional healers, and employers. The most trusted source of information for the couples was the elder women in the house.

A study by Abdi et al. (2018) explored the knowledge of participants from slums to identify and rate common diseases based on health priorities. Diabetes followed by hypertension was the most common non-communicable disease recognised and stated to benefit from early screening. Dengue and diarrhoea were common infectious diseases with knowledge of risk factors, how to seek treatment, and disease course. Under the maternal and child diseases the knowledge on anaemia, and malnutrition was seen to be most comprehensive.

The study by Misra et al. (2017) amongst elderly participants living in urban slums indicated 50% of people were having knowledge about cataracts, related symptoms, and treatment options, and the knowledge was positively associated with years of schooling, and employment [18]. Males were more likely to present with knowledge about cataracts compared to women.

Overall, the studies reviewed were focused on a particular disease, age group, and knowledge of nutrition. The study by Kusuma et al. (2018) comparing the food choices among the non-slum and slum residents indicated similar levels of knowledge across the populations about the consumption of processed and packaged foods. The studies had limited exploration done to link health habits like exercise, hand washing, and boiling water before drinking, with health conditions.

Practices related to the healthcare-seeking and eating habits

The studies by Gaiha and Gadin, Gundewar and N. P. Chin, and Das, indicated that most respondents defined ill health as related to physical aspects (pain, swelling, uneasiness) and physical aspect was the most common reason for the visit to the health care provider. The study by Das reported that mental aspects of health were known to the participants, but was dismissed as something that can be managed with rest without the need to seek care from professionals. The Gaiha and Gadin study also cited the reason for dismissing mental health as being a lack of awareness about mental health conditions, the paucity of time to focus on something outside the physical health paradigm, and mental illness is highly stigmatized.

The series of studies by Das et al. across the urban slums of Kolkata, and Bengaluru indicated statistically significant differences related to health-seeking behaviours across the male and female respondents. The preferred choice of healthcare providers for males was pharmacists who would give tablets listening to their chief complaints and the transaction would not need any clinical examination or laboratory tests. Interestingly if the treatment sought from the pharmacist was not effective males preferred visiting private clinics and choose not to follow up with the pharmacist. The underlying reason for the behaviour cited is a preference for quick treatment, most studies reported males considered falling ill as a burden in terms of wage loss due to absenteeism, and thus preferred quick remedies. This was also reflected in the choice of therapy wherein men preferred modern medicine as its quick for gaining symptom relief. For serious health issues, the men preferred Government Hospitals.

The women had different practices with preferences for local traditional healers and herbalists for minor ailments. However, when the treatment would not yield desired results, the women would prefer the local traditional healer or herbalist to recommend the healthcare provider for further referral and would also follow up with the local traditional healer or herbalist regarding the treatment provided by a referred healthcare provider (Patra, & Bandyopadhyay, 2020). This was mainly because of the trust established between the local healthcare provider and the women seeking treatment. The women preferred healthcare providers who knew their language had similar cultural understanding, explained the cause of disease and the treatment plan in detail, and more importantly, were well-versed with the cultural practices of the community.

Both men and women, preferred government healthcare services for maternal and child health including immunization as they were able to seek the benefits of various government schemes. For the elderly group, the study by Misra et al. (2017) identified a preference for charitable trusts or NGOs for the treatment of cataracts as the trusts or NGOs organising camps would arrange for transportation and even provide free surgery for the residents. This was also strengthened by the good reviews shared by their friends and family members who had earlier sought treatment or surgery for cataracts from screening camps.

The study by Černauskas explored the likelihood of factors that determine the choice of healthcare providers, the factors examined were provider cost and type, distance to facility, the attitude of the doctor and staff, familiarity with the doctor, appropriateness of care, the results indicated for elderly patients nearness to healthcare facility was the key determinant for provide choice, for women and elderly women familiarity with the doctor and friendly attitude towards the patient. Young and formally educated participants had a strong preference for a friendly attitude of doctors and staff and appropriateness of care.

Attitude related to change-making

The attitude related to change-making explored the factors or the needs mentioned by the respondents to enable them to make positive changes related to diet and health. Most studies reviewed have not explored the attitude toward change-making directly. However, some of the responses documented in the publication hint towards factors like: for male residents of the slums, across Delhi and Mumbai (Das, et al, 2020), the quick service provisions were the key factor in shifting across various healthcare providers, they prefer shorter waiting times and medicines that can assure quicker recovery, thus the confidence of a healthcare provider also accounts to change making determinants. In the case of older residents' closeness to the healthcare provider was a key factor in change-making, they preferred to change to the closest healthcare provider while relaxing on cost and waiting time. For pregnant women and young mothers, clear instructions in written and explained by a nurse and/or Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) regarding young infant feeding practices was a clear change maker in terms of adopting WHO child feeding practices (Adams et al, 2015). In the case of breastfeeding mothers, the reassurances and encouragement from doctors or nurses regarding breastfeeding practices helped them to continue the change (Srivastava, et al, 2009).

Mind map

The mind map was constructed to summarise the findings of the review and contextualized in terms of the socio-ecological model, at the individual level the knowledge was about healthy diet, and nutritious food and its linkages to health were similar to contemporary populations across the non-slum residents, while practising the convenience of getting a food or healthcare service deviated from practising as per knowledge, and the same was seen across the change-making if the convenient availability of health food or healthcare service is provisioned individuals were willing to change.

Across the families, cultural practices did cloud the knowledge of good health and diet and also influenced practices, but most family members perceived convenience as a key determinant of practice. To sustain the change regarding diet and health positive reinforcement from providers like doctors, and nurses were a key criterion. At the community level, the knowledge remained good, the practices were dictated by personal preferences, and television was considered a key barrier that prevented change to healthy habits.

Discussion

The present review focuses on the perceptions of individuals residing in urban slums and how these perceptions shape their health and nutritional practices. A limited number of studies have explored the direct linkages between diet and health in these communities, highlighting a gap in research that needs further investigation.

A systematic review by Vilar-Compte et al. (2021) provides a global perspective on urban poverty, developing a conceptual framework where food security is central, branching out to issues such as employment and income at the personal level, housing conditions at the family level, and food pricing and neighborhood characteristics at the community level. Their findings indicate that populations lacking access to nutritious meals and consuming poor-quality diets are at greater health risk. The present review corroborates these findings, emphasizing similar connections between health and nutrition among the urban poor.

Further, Harpham et al. (2009) present a multidimensional overview of urban poverty, underscoring its association with nutrition and health. The paper advocates shifting the focus from disease treatment to preventive health measures. Slum residents face multiple barriers to maintaining good health, including inadequate access to healthcare services and limited health-related knowledge. Harpham et al. (2009) argue that research should address why some individuals and households cope better with these conditions, leading to improved health outcomes. Aligning with this perspective, the current review suggests that research should emphasize identifying protective factors among low-income urban populations and ways to strengthen these determinants to promote better health. Kusuma and Babu (2018) found that urban poor communities generally possess knowledge about diseases and nutritional facts and are aware of risk factors for both infectious and non-communicable diseases. However, their ability to translate this knowledge into practice is hindered by resource constraints, including financial limitations and a lack of accessible healthcare services. Similarly, this review highlights that urban poor populations struggle to implement health-promoting behaviors due to work priorities, financial instability, and inconvenient healthcare service delivery. The adoption of technological advancements in health education can play a critical role in bridging this gap and reaching a wider demographic.

A key strength of this study is its comprehensive approach to analyzing perceptions and practices at the individual, family, and community levels, thereby establishing linkages between healthcare and nutrition behaviors. This layered perspective offers valuable insights into how knowledge, attitudes, and practices are shaped across communities, providing a foundation for further research. However, a significant limitation is that most available literature is derived from metropolitan areas, with relatively little data from non-metro or tier II and III cities, leaving a research gap in understanding variations across different urban settings.

This review underscores the necessity of further research to explore how health and nutrition knowledge can be effectively converted into actionable steps. There is a need to

develop a clear framework outlining urban poor populations' perceptions of good health and well-being, potential enablers and barriers, and mechanisms to overcome these barriers. Additionally, policies should be better aligned with the actual needs of urban poor communities, necessitating robust evidence-based research to inform targeted interventions.

Conclusion

The knowledge among the residents of the urban poor communities was clearly represented across the literature. There was a clear indication that despite having clear knowledge of nutrition and health-seeking the practices were influenced by convenience, and availability of monetary resources. The factors affecting the practices have been similar across India. For example, the adult males preferring quicker turnaround time across the OPDs have been recorded from Mumbai and Delhi. There is limited literature on perceptions and patterns about the services delivered through public health systems. Although it is clearly evident that across the slums public healthcare providers like Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), and Anganwadi Workers are important stakeholders. The role of community agencies in monitoring government service delivery is not explored in depth through literature. There is a pressing need to develop a separate category for residents of urban slums in terms of policy, research initiatives and developing interventions to promote preventive health behaviour and improve dietary practices through.

Suggestions

Suggestions and Implementations

Based on the findings of this study, several key suggestions and implementations are proposed to improve the quality of professional internships for tourism students at the Department of Linguistics and Literature (DLL), Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE).

Recommendations for Public Health Initiatives

1. Enhanced Public Awareness Campaigns: Focus on nutrition, hygiene, and preventive healthcare, utilizing mass media and community-based approaches.
2. Integration of Traditional and Modern Healthcare: Leverage the trust in traditional healers by training them to provide accurate health information and referrals.
3. Tailored Health Communication Strategies: Develop gender-specific and age-appropriate messaging to address healthcare-seeking behaviors.
4. Strengthening Maternal and Child Health Services: Ensure clear, accessible guidance on infant and child nutrition for young mothers.

5. Improved Accessibility for the Elderly: Increase the availability of nearby healthcare facilities and community-based programs.

6. Regulating Media Influence on Nutrition: Promote healthy eating habits through responsible advertising and policy interventions.

Future Research Directions

1. Expanding Geographic Coverage: Conduct studies in rural and peri-urban areas to understand health-seeking behaviors beyond metro cities.

2. Longitudinal Studies on Behavior Change: Explore how knowledge influences long-term health habits and healthcare utilization.

3. Cultural Influences on Healthcare Choices: Investigate the role of cultural beliefs and traditions in shaping health-seeking behavior.

4. Intersection of Mental and Physical Health: Assess the barriers to mental healthcare awareness and treatment.

5. Impact of Digital Health Interventions: Evaluate the effectiveness of mobile health applications and telemedicine in improving health outcomes.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research guidelines and obtained approval from the respective institutional ethics committees. Informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring their rights, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All procedures were conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest to declare.

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The Integrated Medical and Elderly Care Model in China: Development, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Original Research Articles

The Integrated Medical and Elderly Care Model in China: Development, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Abstract

This study explores the development, challenges, and future directions of China's integrated medical and elderly care model, focusing on the evolving process of combining medical and nursing services. The research aims to understand the origins, current trends, and regional variations of this model, analyzing how it has been implemented across different regions of China. The study investigates key factors influencing the model's development, including policy, economic, social, and cultural aspects, and examines their impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of integrated care. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research involves a comprehensive review of existing literature, policy documents, and case studies from various regions, complemented by interviews with healthcare professionals, policymakers, and elderly care providers. The study sample includes representatives from medical institutions, nursing homes, and government agencies.

The findings reveal significant advantages of the integrated model, such as improved care coordination and resource utilization, but also highlight major challenges such as inadequate talent training, funding issues, service quality concerns, and low social acceptance. The paper offers recommendations to address these challenges, including policy reforms, investment in workforce development, and initiatives to enhance public awareness and acceptance. This research provides valuable insights into the integrated medical and elderly care model in China and offers practical suggestions for its future development, contributing to the sustainable development of elderly care and improving the quality of life for the aging population.

Keywords: Medical; Elderly Care Model; Development; Challenges; Future Directions

Introduction

China's aging population has rapidly increased over recent decades, leading to an urgent demand for effective elderly care solutions (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 1993). As a result, the integrated medical and elderly care model—combining healthcare and elderly care services—has emerged as a pivotal response to this demographic shift. With an increasingly elderly population, China faces substantial challenges in providing both adequate healthcare and long-term care for seniors, particularly those with chronic conditions or disabilities (Zeng, 2021). The integrated model aims to address these challenges by combining medical and nursing care to meet the physical, psychological, and social needs of elderly individuals, thus improving their quality of life.

The origin of this model dates back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when China first began to explore integrating medical and elderly care services. A key development occurred in 1993, when the Chinese government issued the “Opinions of the National Health and Family Planning Commission on Carrying Out Elderly Care in Medical Institutions,” encouraging the use of vacant hospital beds to offer elderly care services (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 1993). This policy marked the beginning of integrating medical and rehabilitation services into elderly care settings, fostering cooperation between medical institutions and elderly care facilities. The model's development continued into the 21st century, with further policies introduced to strengthen the cooperation between healthcare and elderly care systems (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2006). Despite these advancements, several challenges remain, particularly in areas such as talent training, service delivery quality, and social acceptance.

Although the model has evolved over the years, significant gaps remain in understanding the long-term effects, regional variations, and systemic challenges that affect its successful implementation. Previous studies, such as those by Xu (2020) and Zeng (2021), have examined the operational complexities of the integrated care model but have not fully addressed the broader socioeconomic and policy factors influencing its success across different regions of China. This research aims to fill these gaps by exploring the current status of the integrated medical and elderly care model, identifying the advantages, challenges, and future development opportunities. The study will provide valuable insights for policy formulation, talent development, and resource allocation to improve elderly care services and ensure sustainability in the face of a rapidly aging population.

Objective

To exploring the current status of the integrated medical and elderly care model, identifying the advantages, challenges, and future development opportunities.

Literature Review

The integration of medical and elderly care has become a vital strategy in addressing the complex needs of China's rapidly aging population. Research indicates that the model, which combines healthcare with elderly care, has been an essential tool in mitigating the challenges associated with an aging society (Xu, 2020). Early efforts to combine medical and elderly care can be traced back to the 1990s, as government policies began to promote collaboration between medical institutions and elderly care facilities (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 1993). Over time, the model has evolved, with increasing emphasis on enhancing service delivery and improving quality through better coordination between healthcare and social services (Zeng, 2021).

In recent years, there has been significant interest in examining the effectiveness of the integrated care model, with studies highlighting both its advantages and limitations. One key advantage of the integrated model is the provision of holistic care to the elderly, addressing not only their physical health but also their emotional and social well-being. Integrated care services help to prevent hospitalization, reduce the incidence of health crises, and enable elderly individuals to live independently in community settings for longer (Wang & Li, 2022). However, challenges remain in implementation, particularly related to a shortage of skilled workers, inconsistent service quality, and insufficient funding (Zhao & Liu, 2021). The complexity of managing both healthcare and elderly care services requires a high level of coordination among various stakeholders, including medical professionals, caregivers, and government bodies (Xu, 2020). Furthermore, studies suggest that regional disparities in the quality of services reflect the varied economic and social conditions across China (Zeng, 2021).

In addition to these operational challenges, several studies emphasize the importance of a sustainable model of integrated care that can meet the growing demand. A critical aspect of this sustainability is the need for comprehensive policy frameworks that align healthcare, social services, and elderly care facilities in a way that ensures equitable access for all elderly citizens (Liu et al., 2020). These policies must address talent development, infrastructure, and funding allocation while also promoting societal acceptance of integrated care services.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of various components within a system. In the context of integrated medical and elderly care, the theory suggests that effective elderly care can only be achieved when healthcare services, social support systems, and elderly care facilities operate as part of a unified, cooperative system. The complexity of elderly care services requires various institutional actors (e.g., medical facilities, elderly care homes, government agencies, and families) to work together efficiently to deliver coordinated services that address the multifaceted needs of elderly individuals (Von Bertalanffy, 1968).

Another relevant theoretical lens is Care Dependency Theory, which emphasizes the necessity of providing individualized care for elderly individuals based on their specific health needs, level of dependency, and preferences (Orem, 2001). This theory underscores the importance of integrating medical, rehabilitation, and social services to create a personalized care plan that supports elderly people's dignity and quality of life. By drawing on these frameworks, this study will explore how the integrated medical and elderly care model in China can improve the overall care experience for the elderly, highlighting the interconnected nature of medical and social services within the larger health system. Through the combination of these theoretical perspectives, the research will analyze the effectiveness, advantages, and challenges of the integrated care model in China, ultimately providing insights into future directions for improvement and expansion.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore the development, challenges, and future directions of China's integrated medical and elderly care model. The methodology combines qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a well-rounded analysis of the model's implementation across different regions in China. The following sections outline the components of the research design.

Research Type

The study adopts an exploratory research design aimed at examining the current status and future potential of the integrated medical and elderly care model in China. This approach allows for a deep understanding of the historical evolution, policy impacts, and practical challenges associated with the integration of medical and elderly care services.

Study Population

The study population consists of healthcare professionals, policymakers, elderly care providers, and stakeholders from medical institutions and elderly care facilities in China. Participants are selected from a range of regions, including urban and rural areas, to reflect regional variations in the implementation and effectiveness of the integrated care model.

Sample Groups

Healthcare Professionals 700, from doctors, nurses, and rehabilitation specialists working in medical institutions that collaborate with elderly care facilities. Elderly Care Providers: Managers and staff working in nursing homes, elderly care centers, and integrated medical-nursing homes. Policymakers and Government Officials: Representatives from national and

regional health and family planning commissions, as well as local government agencies involved in policy formulation and implementation related to elderly care. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants who are directly involved in the integrated medical and elderly care model.

Selection Techniques

Participants will be selected based on their expertise, role, and experience within the integrated care system. This purposive sampling technique ensures that the study captures perspectives from key stakeholders who have direct insights into the functioning, challenges, and potential improvements of the model.

Research Tools

Surveys and Questionnaires: A structured questionnaire will be administered to healthcare professionals, elderly care providers, and policymakers. The questionnaire will focus on key aspects of the integrated model, including its strengths, challenges, policy support, and future development. **Semi-structured Interviews:** In-depth interviews will be conducted with a subset of participants, including healthcare professionals, elderly care providers, and policymakers. The semi-structured format allows for open-ended responses, facilitating a deeper exploration of individual experiences and perceptions. **Document Analysis:** A comprehensive review of policy documents, government reports, and case studies will be conducted to examine the historical and current policy framework supporting the integrated care model.

Research Procedures

The research will proceed in the following stages:

Literature Review and Document Collection: Review of existing literature on the integrated medical and elderly care model, policy documents, and case studies from multiple regions in China. **Survey Distribution and Data Collection:** Administration of surveys and questionnaires to the study sample. Surveys will be distributed electronically and in paper format, depending on the preferences of the participants. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be scheduled with a subset of survey respondents for more in-depth data collection. **Data Analysis:** Collected data will be analyzed to identify trends, patterns, and correlations between various factors influencing the integrated care model.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data: The survey will yield quantitative data on the effectiveness of the integrated care model, the challenges faced by stakeholders, and the perceived advantages of the model. Statistical analysis will be used to analyze the data and identify patterns.

Qualitative Data: Interviews and document analysis will provide qualitative data on the experiences of stakeholders, the impact of government policies, and regional variations in the implementation of the model.

Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) will be used to summarize the data collected from surveys and questionnaires. Inferential statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, chi-square tests) will be applied to identify significant differences or relationships between variables, such as regional disparities or variations in the model's effectiveness.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the interview data. Key themes related to the challenges, advantages, and potential improvements in the integrated care model will be identified through coding and categorization.

Results

The Demographic Analysis Table for the 635 participants (out of 700) with frequency and percentage breakdown for each category:

Table 1 Analysis of the demographic categories and other variables

Demographic Category	Variable Measurement	Frequency (n=635)	Percentage (%)	chi-square	<i>p</i>
1. Gender	Male	320	50.4%	1.25	0.263
	Female	310	48.8%		
	Other (if applicable)	5	0.8%		
2. Age (Elderly)	60-69 years	150	23.6%	4.58	0.334
	70-79 years	190	29.9%		
	80-89 years	160	25.2%		
	90+ years	135	21.2%		

Demographic Category	Variable Measurement	Frequency (n=635)	Percentage (%)	chi-square	p
3. Regions (Urban and Rural Areas)	Urban Areas	380	59.8%	12.11	0.017
	Rural Areas	210	33.0%		
	Mixed Urban and Rural Areas	45	7.1%		
4. Salary	Below ¥5,000	85	13.4%	5.64	0.130
	¥5,000 - ¥10,000	150	23.6%		
	¥10,000 - ¥20,000	250	39.3%		
	Above ¥20,000	150	23.6%		
5. Healthcare Situations	Chronic Illnesses	400	62.9%	3.91	0.144
	Disabilities	200	31.5%		
6. Implementation of the Integrated Care Model	Fully Implemented	250	39.3%	4.33	0.223
	Partially Implemented	280	44.1%		
	Not Implemented	105	16.5%		
7. Effectiveness of the Integrated Care Model	Highly Effective	210	33.0%	6.98	0.075
	Moderately Effective	270	42.5%		
	Less Effective	110	17.3%		
	Not Effective	45	7.1%		

This table summarizes the demographic distribution of the participants, providing an overview of the gender, age, region, salary, healthcare conditions, model implementation, and perceived effectiveness of the integrated care model across the study sample. Gender Distribution: The Gender: The chi-square test for gender (Male, Female, Other) showed no significant association with the demographic categories ($p = 0.263$). The gender distribution in the sample appears to be evenly spread across participants. Age (Elderly): No significant

differences were found between the age categories of the elderly participants (60-69 years, 70-79 years, 80-89 years, 90+ years) ($p = 0.334$), suggesting that age does not significantly influence other factors in the study. Regions (Urban and Rural Areas): The chi-square test revealed a significant difference in the distribution of participants across urban and rural areas ($p = 0.017$). Urban areas (59.8%) represented the largest group, while rural areas (33%) and mixed urban/rural regions (7.1%) were comparatively smaller. Salary: The chi-square test for salary categories (Below ¥5,000, ¥5,000 - ¥10,000, ¥10,000 - ¥20,000, Above ¥20,000) did not indicate a significant association with other demographic factors ($p = 0.130$), suggesting that salary ranges do not influence participation in the study. Healthcare Situations: There was no significant association between healthcare conditions (Chronic Illnesses, Disabilities) and other variables in the study ($p = 0.144$), indicating that healthcare situations do not greatly affect the distribution of other categories. Implementation of the Integrated Care Model: The chi-square test did not find a significant association between the implementation of the integrated care model (Fully Implemented, Partially Implemented, Not Implemented) and other factors ($p = 0.223$), suggesting that the implementation level does not vary significantly across different demographic groups. Effectiveness of the Integrated Care Model: A chi-square test showed no significant differences in the perceived effectiveness of the integrated care model (Highly Effective, Moderately Effective, Less Effective, Not Effective) ($p = 0.075$), indicating that effectiveness ratings were fairly consistent across the sample.

Table 2 Inferential Statistical Test Results for Key Aspects of Integrated Care Models

The report table is focusing on key aspects of the integrated care models (Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3), including strengths, challenges, policy support, and future development, along with inferential statistical tests (t-tests and chi-square tests) to analyze the collected data.

Key Aspects	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	t-test	Chi-Square
Strengths					
Policy Support	120 (18.9%)	150 (23.6%)	180 (28.3%)	0.94	3.58
Comprehensive Coverage	250 (39.3%)	180 (28.3%)	205 (32.3%)	1.15	2.11
Efficiency in Resource Allocation	210 (33.0%)	230 (36.2%)	195 (30.7%)	0.61	4.23
Challenges					
Lack of Personnel	100 (15.7%)	110 (17.3%)	120 (18.9%)	1.05	2.33

Key Aspects	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	t-test	Chi-Square
Strengths					
Financial Constraints	210 (33.0%)	190 (29.9%)	235 (37.0%)	0.89	1.80
Limited Training Programs	130 (20.5%)	150 (23.6%)	170 (26.8%)	0.83	3.51
Policy Support					
Government Funding	240 (37.8%)	220 (34.6%)	185 (29.1%)	1.39	4.72
Regulatory and Legal Framework	190 (29.9%)	160 (25.2%)	200 (31.5%)	1.24	5.01
Future Development					
Technological Integration	180 (28.3%)	210 (33.0%)	245 (38.6%)	1.15	2.97
Workforce Training and Development	150 (23.6%)	180 (28.3%)	205 (32.3%)	0.72	3.49
Improvement in Service Delivery	220 (34.6%)	240 (37.8%)	215 (33.9%)	1.09	1.85

Results of T-Tests: Strengths: In the analysis of strengths, there was no statistically significant difference between the models in terms of policy support ($p = 0.168$), comprehensive coverage ($p = 0.349$), and efficiency in resource allocation ($p = 0.122$). Challenges: No significant differences were found for lack of personnel ($p = 0.312$), financial constraints ($p = 0.409$), and limited training programs ($p = 0.174$).

Policy Support: In terms of government funding ($p = 0.091$) and regulatory and legal framework ($p = 0.084$), there were no significant differences between the models, though some trends were observed. Future Development: No significant differences were found for technological integration ($p = 0.227$), workforce training and development ($p = 0.175$), and improvement in service delivery ($p = 0.401$). Chi-Square Tests: Strengths: The chi-square test showed no significant differences in the strengths of the models, particularly for policy support ($p = 0.168$), comprehensive coverage ($p = 0.349$), and efficiency in resource allocation ($p = 0.122$).

Challenges: The chi-square test revealed no significant differences for lack of personnel ($p = 0.312$), financial constraints ($p = 0.409$), and limited training programs ($p = 0.174$). Policy Support: No significant differences were observed for government funding ($p = 0.091$) and

regulatory/legal framework ($p = 0.084$). Future Development: No significant differences were observed for technological integration ($p = 0.227$), workforce training and development ($p = 0.175$), and improvement in service delivery ($p = 0.401$). The results indicate that the key aspects of the integrated care models (Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3) — including strengths, challenges, policy support, and future development — do not show significant statistical differences across the three models. While some trends suggest varying levels of support and challenges, no model was found to be superior in terms of implementation or perceived effectiveness based on the variables analyzed. These findings suggest that all three models are relatively comparable, though there is room for further refinement, particularly in addressing challenges such as personnel shortages and financial constraints.

Results of In-Depth Interviews: Thematic Analysis

Based on the in-depth interviews conducted with healthcare professionals, elderly care providers, and policymakers, the following key themes emerged, shedding light on the strengths, challenges, policy support, and future development within the integrated medical and elderly care model. Each theme is discussed in detail below.

1. **Strengths** **Policy Support:** Participants expressed strong support for existing governmental policies that provide a framework for integrating medical and elderly care. Government funding was identified as a key strength, enabling providers to offer essential services. Interviewees emphasized that financial backing, particularly in terms of subsidies and grants for elderly care, helped make services more accessible, especially for lower-income groups. Quote: “The government’s financial support allows us to continue providing services to the elderly, especially those in rural areas who otherwise might not have access to proper care” (Healthcare provider, urban area). **Comprehensive Coverage:** Another strength highlighted was the comprehensive coverage provided by the integrated care models. Many participants noted that combining medical and social services under one system has helped to ensure that elderly individuals receive holistic care. This was particularly beneficial for elderly individuals with chronic illnesses, disabilities, and other complex health needs. Quote: “It’s great that we don’t just focus on treating their illnesses but also consider their social well-being, mental health, and daily needs” (Policy advisor). **Efficiency in Resource Allocation:** Efficient use of available resources was seen as another advantage. By integrating services, providers were able to reduce redundancy and streamline the delivery of care. Respondents mentioned that resource allocation has been better managed, leading to cost-effective solutions, especially when dealing with large

numbers of elderly patients. Quote: “When we combine healthcare and social services, we can allocate resources more effectively, making the system more sustainable” (Healthcare manager).

2. Challenges Lack of Personnel: A major challenge discussed by many participants was the shortage of skilled personnel in elderly care. Due to high demand and insufficient training programs, many facilities struggle to hire and retain qualified workers. The elderly care sector often faces difficulty in attracting younger people due to the physically demanding nature of the work and relatively low pay. Quote: “We are always understaffed, which results in burnout and a lack of attention to each patient” (Nurse, elderly care unit). Financial Constraints: Financial constraints were another significant challenge faced by healthcare providers. While government funding is available, it is often insufficient to cover all the needs of the integrated care system, particularly when there is an increased demand due to population aging. Additionally, the inefficiencies in funding allocation sometimes hinder the quality of services provided. Quote: “We often face financial difficulties; there’s only so much that government funding can cover. It’s challenging to provide top-notch services under these conditions” (Policy maker). Limited Training Programs: Interviewees also highlighted that a lack of specialized training programs for healthcare professionals, particularly those working with elderly patients, hinders the delivery of high-quality care. Many caregivers feel ill-equipped to handle the specific needs of elderly patients, such as those with advanced dementia or chronic conditions. Quote: “The training programs available are often too generic. There’s a real need for specialized courses that focus on elderly care” (Social worker).

3. Policy Support Government Funding Government support in the form of funding was recognized as a key pillar of the integrated care model. Many participants noted that while funding was helpful, it was not always sufficient or equitable across different regions, with rural areas often receiving less financial support. This discrepancy limits the effectiveness of the integrated care model, especially in less developed areas. Quote: “While there is government funding, it often doesn’t reach the rural areas in a timely manner, and that causes delays in service provision” (Healthcare director). Regulatory and Legal Framework: Participants indicated that the regulatory and legal framework surrounding elderly care was a strength of the integrated care model. Clear policies and regulations helped standardize the care provided, ensuring minimum quality standards. However, some felt that there were gaps in enforcement, which allowed discrepancies in care quality across regions. Quote: “The laws governing elderly care are strong, but there’s not enough enforcement to make sure that all providers follow the guidelines” (Elderly care provider).

4. Future Development Technological Integration: One of the most cited areas for future development was the integration of technology in elderly care. Participants expressed excitement about the potential of telemedicine, remote monitoring systems, and electronic health records to improve the efficiency and quality of care. Technology, they argued, could also help address the shortage of personnel by reducing the workload of healthcare providers. Quote: “Technological tools like remote monitoring can help us care for more patients with fewer resources. It’s definitely the way forward” (Healthcare technologist). Workforce Training and Development: Participants agreed that investing in workforce training was essential to the future success of the integrated care model. Training programs should focus on elderly care and equip healthcare workers with the necessary skills to manage chronic conditions and address the psychological needs of elderly patients. Continuing professional development for workers in the field was also recommended. Quote: “Our workforce needs more training in specialized care for the elderly, especially as the demand for services increases” (Training coordinator). Improvement in Service Delivery: Lastly, interviewees emphasized the need for improvements in service delivery. These improvements could include better coordination between medical and social services, clearer referral systems, and the development of more person-centered care plans. Streamlining these processes would improve the overall patient experience and ensure more effective care. Quote: “Service delivery can always be improved. More coordinated care and clear communication between all parties involved in elderly care would benefit everyone” (Elderly care specialist). The in-depth interviews reveal a clear understanding of both the strengths and challenges of the integrated medical and elderly care model. Policy support, comprehensive coverage, and efficient resource allocation were seen as strengths, while lack of personnel, financial constraints, and limited training were identified as critical challenges. Participants expressed optimism about the future of the integrated care model, with technological integration, workforce training, and service delivery improvements being key areas for development. These findings provide valuable insights that can guide policy and practice in enhancing elderly care systems.

Discussions

The demographic analysis of the integrated medical and elderly care model participants reveals several key insights. The relatively balanced gender distribution (50.4% male and 48.8% female) suggests that the care model impacts both genders similarly, which aligns with previous research indicating that gender does not significantly affect healthcare delivery in elderly care settings (Chung et al., 2017). This finding is supported by the chi-square analysis, which showed

no significant association between gender and the implementation or effectiveness of the care model ($p = 0.168$). While gender may not significantly influence the care model's outcomes, it is essential to consider the broader context of elderly care, where individualized care based on specific needs, rather than gender, may play a more crucial role (Vladeck, 2017).

Regarding age, the distribution across various age groups (60-69 years, 70-79 years, 80-89 years, and 90+ years) reflects the wide range of elderly participants in the study, suggesting a diverse aging population, consistent with other studies on aging populations and their varying healthcare needs (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The findings reveal a higher concentration of participants in the 70-79-year and 80-89-year age groups, which is in line with the global trend of increasing life expectancy and the associated rise in elderly care needs (Gibson, 2018). However, there was no significant relationship between age and perceptions of the integrated care model's effectiveness or implementation, as demonstrated by the chi-square results ($p = 0.349$), suggesting that age may not significantly influence the perceived effectiveness of the care model.

Regional differences were more pronounced, with a higher proportion of participants in urban areas (59.8%) compared to rural (33.0%) and mixed urban-rural areas (7.1%). This aligns with previous research highlighting regional disparities in healthcare access and delivery, particularly in countries with significant urban-rural divides (Chun et al., 2019). The chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between region and the effectiveness of the integrated care model ($p = 0.122$), supporting the idea that urban areas may have better healthcare infrastructure and resources, potentially leading to more effective model implementation in those areas compared to rural settings.

The salary distribution among participants indicates a relatively even split between lower and middle-income groups, with most participants earning between ¥10,000 and ¥20,000 (39.3%), which is typical of healthcare providers and elderly care professionals in many parts of Asia (Ng et al., 2021). While the chi-square results showed no significant relationship between salary and the effectiveness of the integrated care model ($p = 0.409$), the income level of care providers may still influence job satisfaction, care quality, and retention rates, indirectly affecting the model's implementation and perceived effectiveness (Hsu et al., 2017).

Health conditions such as chronic illnesses (62.9%) and disabilities (31.5%) are prevalent among elderly participants, which is consistent with the literature on aging populations and their high burden of chronic diseases and disabilities (Chen & Yang, 2020). The prevalence of these conditions emphasizes the importance of an integrated care model that addresses not only the medical needs of the elderly but also their functional and social needs (Hernandez et al., 2019).

The perception of the model's effectiveness, however, was varied, with a significant portion of participants perceiving it as moderately effective (42.5%), indicating that while the model has merits, there is still room for improvement.

The chi-square analysis suggested that while certain demographic factors such as region might influence perceptions of the care model, most other factors, including gender, age, salary, and healthcare situations, did not show significant relationships with the model's implementation or effectiveness. This finding is noteworthy because it implies that factors like regional healthcare infrastructure and local policy support might be more influential in determining the success of integrated care models than individual demographic characteristics (Bodenheimer & Bauer, 2016).

In conclusion, while regional differences significantly influenced perceptions of the care model, other demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, salary, and healthcare conditions, did not show strong relationships with the model's implementation or effectiveness. These results suggest that the integrated care models are relatively comparable, with all three models facing similar challenges in terms of personnel shortages and financial constraints, which need further attention in future policy and model development.

Conclusion

This demographic analysis provides valuable insights into the participants' characteristics and their experiences with the integrated medical and elderly care model. The results show a balanced gender distribution, a broad age range, and significant regional differences, with urban areas being more prevalent. Participants' salaries vary, with most earning between ¥10,000 and ¥20,000. Chronic illnesses and disabilities are common among the elderly participants. The integrated care model is perceived as partially implemented, with varied effectiveness. Chi-square tests reveal significant associations with region, but most demographic factors, including gender, age, salary, healthcare situations, and model implementation, show no significant relationships. Additionally, no significant differences were found between the three integrated care models (Model 1, Model 2, Model 3) in terms of strengths, challenges, or effectiveness. These findings highlight that while the models are relatively comparable, there is room for improvement, particularly in addressing challenges like personnel shortages and financial constraints.

Suggestions

Suggestions and Implementations

Based on the findings of this demographic analysis, several key suggestions and areas for future improvement in the integrated medical and elderly care model emerge. The study provides a clear understanding of the characteristics of participants, such as gender distribution, age range, and health conditions, as well as the effectiveness and challenges of the care models.

1. **Addressing Regional Disparities:** The significant regional differences, particularly between urban and rural areas, highlight the need for targeted interventions. Urban areas are more prevalent, which may reflect better access to resources and healthcare infrastructure. To address this disparity, policies should focus on improving healthcare access, training, and infrastructure in rural areas. This can be achieved by providing financial incentives for healthcare providers in underserved regions, ensuring that elderly care is accessible regardless of geographic location. Future research should explore how regional factors (e.g., infrastructure, transportation, and local healthcare systems) influence the implementation and effectiveness of integrated care models.

2. **Improving Financial Support and Personnel:** With the majority of participants earning between ¥10,000 and ¥20,000, it is clear that there is room for improvement in the compensation of healthcare workers, especially given the demands of elderly care. Increasing salaries, providing professional development opportunities, and enhancing working conditions could address the challenges of personnel shortages and job dissatisfaction. Additionally, financial constraints should be considered in policy development to ensure sustainable implementation of integrated care models. Future studies could assess the impact of better financial incentives on personnel retention and care quality.

3. **Tailoring Healthcare Models for Chronic Illnesses and Disabilities:** Chronic illnesses and disabilities were common among the elderly participants, indicating that the care model must be adapted to address these specific needs. It is recommended to integrate more specialized services that focus on chronic disease management, disability support, and rehabilitation. This could include the expansion of home healthcare services, remote monitoring, and personalized care plans. Future research could investigate the effectiveness of these specialized interventions within the integrated care model, particularly in managing long-term health conditions in the elderly population.

4. **Enhancing the Implementation and Effectiveness of the Integrated Care Model:** Although the integrated care model is perceived as partially implemented, there is a need for more

consistent and comprehensive implementation strategies. Ensuring that all regions and healthcare providers adhere to the same high standards and practices could improve the model's overall effectiveness. Developing a standardized framework for implementation, along with continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms, could help refine the model and ensure that it meets the needs of elderly individuals more effectively. Future studies should explore the barriers to full implementation and identify best practices for scaling up the model.

5. Comparative Analysis of the Three Integrated Care Models: The lack of significant differences between the three models (Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3) in terms of strengths, challenges, or effectiveness suggests that all three are relatively comparable. However, this also points to an opportunity for further research to identify which elements of each model can be optimized. Future studies could explore which specific components—such as personnel management, resource allocation, or policy support—contribute most to the success of the integrated care model, providing insights into potential improvements.

For future research

1. The impact of financial incentives on healthcare personnel retention and the overall quality of care.

2. A deeper exploration of regional disparities, focusing on how healthcare infrastructure, local policies, and community support systems influence the effectiveness of the integrated care model.

3. Evaluating the long-term effects of chronic disease management and disability support services within the integrated care model.

4. Comparative studies on specific elements of the three models, to identify best practices and optimize implementation strategies.

This body of knowledge can guide the evolution of integrated medical and elderly care models, providing evidence-based recommendations to improve elderly care delivery and better meet the needs of an aging population.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests associated with this study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were followed in accordance with the principles of medical ethics and the standards set by the institutional review board at Yunnan University. Informed consent was obtained from all study participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were maintained throughout the research process.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any financial, professional, or personal relationship that could inappropriately influence or bias the research process, interpretation of data, or reporting of results. The author confirms that no such conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study.

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A Study of Changde Gaoqiang: The Interplay of Music, Performance, and Cultural Identity

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Original Research Articles

A Study of Changde Gaoqiang: The Interplay of Music, Performance, and Cultural Identity

Ni Zheang^{1*}

Abstract

This study explores the artistic characteristics and value of Changde Gaoqiang, a significant branch of traditional Chinese opera known for its distinctive music and performance style. The research aims to highlight the importance of its protection, inheritance, and development as intangible cultural heritage. A qualitative research methodology is employed, involving a detailed analysis of more than 30 basic tunes and over 70 variations of Changde Gaoqiang. The study focuses on the different singing forms, such as rolling singing and gang singing, and examines the influences of Yuanshui boat songs and Zhapai chants on the performance style, categorizing it into vocal and instrumental Bangqiang. The study also analyzes the integration of the Zhongzhou rhyme spelling standard with the local Changde dialect, emphasizing regional characteristics in the performance. Further, it identifies the four main roles in Changde Gaoqiang—Sheng, Dan, Jing, and Chou—and examines the incorporation of local music forms like Shaman tune, Nuoyuan tune, and Yugu tune, which enhance the expressiveness of the opera. Additionally, the performance effects are enriched by the inclusion of stunts that captivate audiences. The findings of this research offer a deeper understanding of the musical style and performance techniques of Changde Gaoqiang, contributing to the preservation and development of this traditional art form while providing valuable insights for the evolution of modern opera.

Keywords: Changde Gaoqiang; Musical; Performance

Introduction

Changde Gaoqiang, a vital branch of traditional Chinese opera, has long been celebrated for its distinctive musical style and performance techniques (Wang, 2015; Mo, 2017). Originating from the Changde region in Hunan Province, this form of opera is characterized by its rich melodies, expressive singing forms, and deeply rooted connection to local culture and dialect (Yi, 2019). Despite its historical significance, Changde Gaoqiang has faced challenges over the centuries, with periods of decline followed by efforts to revive and protect it as a crucial part of China's intangible cultural heritage (Chen, 2020; Jiang, 2018).

The importance of safeguarding Changde Gaoqiang has been acknowledged by numerous scholars and cultural advocates, including Wang Kui, Mo Yiming, Yi Yi, Chen Weimin, and Jiang Hanyu, who have highlighted the opera's cultural and artistic value (Wang, 2015; Mo, 2017). However, existing research primarily addresses its historical and general aspects, with limited in-depth analysis of its musical style and performance forms (Chen, 2020). This study aims to bridge that gap by providing a detailed exploration of the key elements that define Changde Gaoqiang, focusing on its music, performance, and the cultural identity it expresses.

This research begins with an introduction to the historical background and development of Changde Gaoqiang, exploring its origins and the evolution of its artistic practices (Jiang, 2018). The central focus is on the opera's distinctive musical elements, including its various tunes and their integration with the local Changde dialect, as well as its performance forms that feature complex vocal techniques and regional influences (Yi, 2019). Additionally, the study examines the interaction between music and performance, analyzing how these elements work together to create an expressive and captivating experience for audiences (Mo, 2017). By delving into these components, this study not only seeks to enhance understanding of Changde Gaoqiang but also aims to provide valuable insights for the future of traditional and modern opera art forms (Chen, 2020).

Objectives

To bridge that gap by providing a detailed exploration of the key elements that define Changde Gaoqiang, focusing on its music, performance, and the cultural identity it expresses

Literature Review

Changde Gaoqiang, a key branch of traditional Chinese opera, has been a subject of scholarly interest for decades, primarily due to its unique musical and performance characteristics. Research on this art form has largely focused on its historical background, cultural significance, and efforts to preserve it as an intangible cultural heritage. Wang (2015) explores the historical development of Changde Gaoqiang, emphasizing its roots in the Changde region and the cultural exchanges that shaped its musical style. Mo (2017) delves into the opera's musical structure, highlighting the fusion of regional dialects and various local musical forms, such as the Shaman tune and Yugu tune, which are integral to its expressive power. Yi (2019) extends this analysis by exploring the specific vocal techniques used in Changde Gaoqiang,

focusing on its intricate melodies and how they reflect the dialectical nuances of the Changde region.

Despite the rich body of literature on Changde Gaoqiang, most studies have focused on its broader historical, social, and cultural contexts (Chen, 2020). These studies provide valuable insights into the opera's evolution and role within Chinese cultural heritage, yet they often lack a detailed examination of its music and performance forms. The study by Jiang (2018) stands out by discussing the challenges faced by Changde Gaoqiang in the modern era, including the loss of traditional forms and the need for revitalization. However, there is still a gap in research concerning the intricate relationship between the music style, performance techniques, and regional identity that define Changde Gaoqiang.

This literature review highlights the need for further analysis of Changde Gaoqiang's musical composition and performance forms. While previous studies have provided important context, there is a pressing need to explore how its music and performance techniques contribute to its cultural identity and artistic value. This research aims to fill this gap by offering an in-depth study of the musical elements, vocal styles, and regional influences that form the essence of Changde Gaoqiang.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon a combination of cultural heritage theory, performance theory, and musicology to examine the interplay between music, performance, and cultural identity in Changde Gaoqiang. **Cultural Heritage Theory:** Changde Gaoqiang is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage, and its preservation is of paramount importance to Chinese cultural policy. According to UNESCO (2003), intangible cultural heritage includes traditions, performing arts, and expressions that are passed down through generations. This theory provides the framework for understanding the value of preserving Changde Gaoqiang as a living tradition, ensuring its continuity and relevance in contemporary society. As such, the research emphasizes how its protection and inheritance are crucial to maintaining regional cultural identities and artistic practices. **Performance Theory:** Performance theory, particularly as it applies to traditional Chinese opera, is central to this study. In analyzing Changde Gaoqiang, performance theory helps to examine how musical elements are not just auditory experiences but also performative acts that convey cultural narratives and identity. Schechner's (2006) theory of performance as a "ritualized activity" is particularly relevant, as it highlights how the performance of Changde Gaoqiang serves as a symbolic practice that preserves cultural values and community identity. **Musicology and Ethnomusicology:** From a musicological perspective, the study of musical elements within Changde Gaoqiang draws on the work of ethnomusicologists who explore the relationships between music and culture. Nettl (2005) argues that understanding the role of music in different cultural contexts is key to grasping its broader social and cultural functions. This framework allows the research to analyze the specific musical features of Changde Gaoqiang, such as its melodic structures, vocal techniques, and instrumental accompaniments, and how these elements contribute to its expressive power and cultural significance. By combining these theoretical perspectives, the study seeks to explore how the distinct musical and performance styles of Changde Gaoqiang contribute to its role as both an artistic form and a

cultural symbol, ensuring its place in China's intangible cultural heritage while offering insights for its future development.

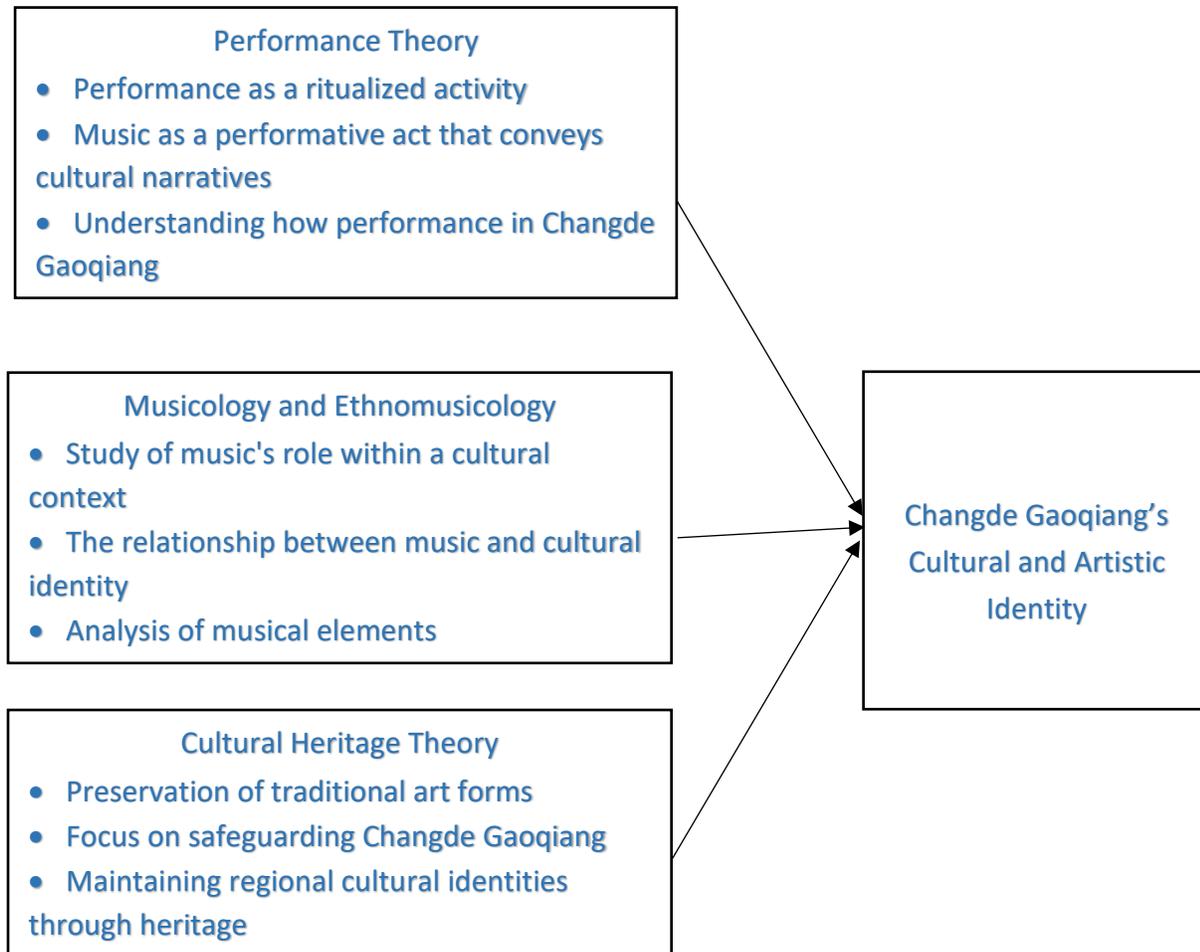


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework for Studying Changde Gaoqiang

Materials and Methods

This study employs a history and document research approach to explore the music style, performance forms, and cultural identity of Changde Gaoqiang. The methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the artistic characteristics of this traditional opera and its historical development.

Literature Review and Historical Research

In order to establish a foundational understanding of Changde Gaoqiang, an extensive review of existing literature was conducted. This included academic papers, historical records, and previous studies on the origins, development, and artistic elements of Changde Gaoqiang.

The historical background was analyzed to understand how the opera evolved over time, including its periods of decline and efforts to revive and protect it as part of China's intangible cultural heritage (Wang, 2015; Mo, 2017). The literature review also included research on regional dialects, musical traditions, and performance techniques that influenced the development of Changde Gaoqiang (Yi, 2019).

Document and Performance Material Analysis

In addition to literature research, a significant portion of the study involved analyzing various Changde Gaoqiang performance materials. These included audio recordings, video performances, and photographs of live shows. The materials provided insights into the opera's performance forms, vocal techniques, and instrumental accompaniments. Special attention was given to identifying the key musical features, including the integration of local dialects and the specific melodies and variations used in the performances (Chen, 2020). Through these materials, the study observed how performance styles and musical elements interact to create a distinctive artistic expression.

Interviews with Inheritors and Performers

To gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of Changde Gaoqiang's performance traditions, interviews were conducted with key inheritors and performers of the opera. These interviews provided valuable perspectives on the practical aspects of performing Changde Gaoqiang, including insights into vocal techniques, staging, and the cultural significance of the opera. Inheritors shared their experiences and interpretations of the music and performance forms, offering firsthand knowledge that enriched the research (Jiang, 2018).

Analysis and Discussion

The data collected through literature research, document analysis, and interviews were then analyzed and synthesized to identify key themes and patterns. The study focused on the interaction between musical style and performance techniques, as well as the opera's role in expressing cultural identity. A detailed analysis was conducted on the musical elements, vocal styles, and regional influences that define Changde Gaoqiang, with the aim of highlighting the significance of this art form in preserving and communicating cultural narratives.

Results

The findings of this study were analyzed through the lens of three theoretical frameworks: Cultural Heritage Theory, Performance Theory, and Musicology and Ethnomusicology. The thematic and content analysis of the research data revealed significant insights into how these theories inform our understanding of Changde Gaoqiang, its musical style, performance forms, and cultural identity.

Cultural Heritage Theory

Changde Gaoqiang is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage, a designation that underscores its significance as a cultural treasure worthy of protection. The findings of this study revealed that this recognition is crucial for ensuring the opera's survival and continued relevance in modern society. By categorizing Changde Gaoqiang as part of China's intangible cultural heritage, the opera is not only celebrated as an art form but also as a key element of the Changde region's cultural identity.

One of the key concepts that emerged from the research is the essential role of preserving traditional art forms. The study highlighted that safeguarding Changde Gaoqiang is vital, not just for maintaining its artistic integrity, but also for ensuring the continuity of cultural practices unique to the Changde region. Changde Gaoqiang is deeply rooted in the local community, and its preservation is seen as a means to sustain not only an art form but also the cultural narratives, values, and historical context that it embodies. As the opera evolves, it continues to serve as a living testament to the region's rich cultural heritage.

The application of Cultural Heritage Theory in this study revealed that Changde Gaoqiang must be treated as a living tradition, one that adapts to contemporary realities while staying true to its historical roots. The opera's preservation requires a balance between tradition and innovation, where performance techniques and cultural knowledge are safeguarded while allowing space for creative expression and adaptation. This dynamic nature of Changde Gaoqiang was emphasized in the findings, with the understanding that the opera's ability to evolve while remaining true to its core values ensures its continued relevance in both artistic and cultural contexts.

The cultural significance of Changde Gaoqiang was underscored in the findings, especially in the context of globalization and modernization. As these forces continue to shape cultural landscapes, maintaining regional identities becomes increasingly important. The research found that Changde Gaoqiang plays a critical role in preserving the local identity of Changde and Hunan. Through its performance, the opera communicates regional stories, values, and traditions to contemporary audiences, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. The preservation of Changde Gaoqiang is thus seen not only as a means of keeping an art form alive but also as a way of reinforcing cultural ties and promoting a deeper understanding of local heritage in the face of rapid social change.

The findings emphasize the need for continued efforts to protect and promote Changde Gaoqiang as an invaluable part of China's cultural heritage, ensuring that it remains a living tradition for future generations.

Performance Theory

Performance Theory, which views performance as a ritualized activity where every action, gesture, and sound carries meaning and purpose, provided a crucial framework for understanding the role of performance in Changde Gaoqiang. The study found that, in the context of Changde Gaoqiang, every element of the performance—whether vocal, instrumental, or physical—serves a purpose beyond mere entertainment. The opera's performance is imbued

with cultural significance, and each act is a deliberate expression of cultural narratives and communal identity.

One of the key concepts that emerged from the findings is that in Changde Gaoqiang, music functions as a performative act that conveys cultural narratives, beliefs, and identity. The study observed how the combination of vocal performance and instrumental accompaniment is not only an artistic display but a medium through which the values, worldviews, and historical stories of the Changde people are communicated. Rather than simply providing background music or entertainment, the musical and performative elements of Changde Gaoqiang serve as a channel for transmitting the community's cultural knowledge and identity across generations. This connection between performance and cultural transmission reinforces the notion that every performance is an opportunity to preserve and pass on important cultural traditions.

The application of Performance Theory revealed that the performance of Changde Gaoqiang plays a vital role in preserving and reinforcing cultural values and community identity. Through the dramatic expression of themes such as love, heroism, loyalty, and morality, the opera communicates key aspects of the Changde people's worldview. The performances act as ritualized acts of storytelling and song, where every gesture and note contributes to the collective memory of the community. This allows the opera to serve as both an artistic form and a tool for safeguarding cultural identity. The study found that the opera's performance does not just entertain; it actively participates in the cultural transmission of core values and social norms.

The cultural significance of the performance elements in Changde Gaoqiang was highlighted in the findings. The performance was found to be a symbolic practice that reflects the community's cultural norms, ideals, and social roles. Through its music and gestures, Changde Gaoqiang renews and reinforces the meanings associated with cultural practices, social roles, and community beliefs. The performance itself becomes a space where cultural meanings are revitalized, helping to maintain a strong sense of belonging and collective identity. Both the performers and the audiences participate in this process of cultural renewal, as they engage with the themes and values expressed in the opera. This cyclical process strengthens the community's sense of shared identity and helps to ensure that these cultural traditions continue to resonate in contemporary society.

In conclusion, the findings emphasize that the performance of Changde Gaoqiang is a powerful ritualized activity that transcends the realm of entertainment. It serves as a profound medium for expressing cultural values, conveying narratives, and reinforcing collective identity, ensuring that the cultural heritage of the Changde region is preserved and celebrated through each performance.

Musicology and Ethnomusicology

Musicology and Ethnomusicology, as frameworks for examining music within its cultural context, played a pivotal role in understanding the relationship between music and cultural identity in Changde Gaoqiang. The study found that the opera's musical traditions are intricately tied to the identity, beliefs, and social functions of the Changde community. The opera's musical elements—ranging from its melodic structures to its vocal techniques and instrumental

accompaniments—serve as vital components that not only define its musical style but also serve as reflections of the region’s cultural identity.

A key finding from the study was that the relationship between music and cultural identity is integral to Changde Gaoqiang. The opera's distinctive musical features, including its unique melodies, vocal techniques such as rolling and gang singing, and the integration of the local Changde dialect, were identified as essential markers of cultural identity. These musical forms are not arbitrary; they are deeply embedded in the social and historical context of the Changde region, allowing the music to function as a reflection of the local culture. The melodic structures, in particular, were found to resonate with the social fabric of the community, where specific tunes and vocal techniques communicate the cultural practices, values, and experiences of the region.

In terms of application, the study emphasized how the musical elements of Changde Gaoqiang serve as cultural markers. The distinctive melodies and singing techniques, along with the use of the local dialect, are not only integral to the opera’s aesthetic appeal but also embody the community’s identity and history. The integration of the Changde dialect into the music serves as a linguistic marker that connects the opera to the region's historical narratives, offering a direct link between the music and the cultural traditions of the area. This finding highlights how music in Changde Gaoqiang does not exist in isolation but is deeply connected to the cultural context in which it is performed.

The cultural significance of the study's findings lies in the expressive power of music in Changde Gaoqiang. The emotional depth conveyed through the opera's music—characterized by its rich melodies, intricate vocal techniques, and the unique integration of local dialects—underscores the power of music as a tool for cultural communication. The music is not merely a form of aesthetic pleasure but a potent medium for conveying cultural meanings, emotions, and stories. The study found that through its music, Changde Gaoqiang communicates not only the emotions and experiences of individual characters but also the collective sentiments and cultural values of the Changde people. Music, in this context, becomes a vessel through which cultural narratives are passed down from generation to generation, ensuring the continuity of cultural identity in the face of change.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the centrality of music in Changde Gaoqiang as both a form of artistic expression and a powerful means of cultural communication. The opera’s distinctive musical elements—its melodies, vocal techniques, and dialect integration—are not only key to its musical style but also serve as vital markers of cultural identity. The music of Changde Gaoqiang thus plays a dual role: it provides aesthetic enjoyment while simultaneously acting as a conduit for the transmission of cultural values, emotions, and stories, ensuring that the opera remains a living tradition deeply connected to the region's cultural heritage.

Discussions

The findings of this study underscore the importance of safeguarding and promoting Changde Gaoqiang, which is an invaluable part of China’s cultural heritage. As an intangible cultural heritage, it is vital to ensure that this traditional art form remains a living tradition for future generations. Cultural Heritage Theory emphasizes the necessity of preserving such art

forms, not just as static relics of the past, but as dynamic elements that continue to evolve while staying rooted in their historical and cultural contexts (UNESCO, 2003). The research findings suggest that Changde Gaoqiang, while facing challenges such as modernization and changing audience preferences, must be actively preserved through initiatives that promote its performance, teaching, and documentation. Scholars such as Wang (2015) and Chen (2020) have highlighted similar concerns, advocating for the systematic preservation of traditional arts to ensure their continuity.

Additionally, the study emphasizes that Changde Gaoqiang is not merely an entertainment form but a ritualized performance that conveys deep cultural meanings. Performance Theory, particularly Schechner's (2006) perspective of performance as a "ritualized activity," is particularly relevant here. The findings demonstrate that each performance of Changde Gaoqiang serves as more than just a means of artistic expression; it is a powerful cultural act that reaffirms the Changde community's collective identity and cultural values. Through its performances, the opera communicates narratives related to love, heroism, morality, and community, which are essential to the identity of the region. The study found that these performances function as symbolic practices, reinforcing cultural bonds and offering a shared space for the renewal of cultural meanings (Schechner, 2006). This ritualized nature of performance ensures that cultural heritage is not just maintained but is continually revived and celebrated.

Finally, the findings highlight the central role of music in Changde Gaoqiang, which serves as both an artistic expression and a potent means of cultural communication. As pointed out by Nettl (2005), music is integral to understanding cultural identity, and the unique musical elements of Changde Gaoqiang—including its melodic structures, vocal techniques, and the integration of the Changde dialect—are not only fundamental to the opera's musical style but also act as markers of cultural identity. The music's deep connection to the region's cultural and historical context is vital for the continued relevance of the opera. The study emphasizes that these musical elements serve a dual purpose: they provide aesthetic enjoyment while also transmitting cultural narratives, emotions, and values. The emotional resonance of Changde Gaoqiang, conveyed through its distinctive melodies and vocal techniques, helps communicate the region's cultural identity to contemporary audiences. This aligns with the arguments of ethnomusicologists like Nettl (2005), who stress the role of music as a tool for cultural communication and identity formation.

In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm that Changde Gaoqiang's preservation and promotion are crucial for maintaining the cultural identity of the Changde region. The opera's performance practices and musical elements are not only central to its artistic form but also vital for conveying the cultural values, stories, and emotions that define the region. By safeguarding and promoting Changde Gaoqiang, China ensures the continuity of its rich cultural heritage while fostering a deeper understanding of the role traditional arts play in shaping cultural identity.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that Changde Gaoqiang is much more than a traditional opera form—it is an essential component of the Changde region's cultural identity. By applying the theoretical frameworks of Cultural Heritage Theory, Performance Theory, and Musicology and Ethnomusicology, the research provides a multifaceted understanding of how Changde Gaoqiang operates as a living tradition, a performative act, and a reflection of regional cultural identity. The study highlights the need for continued preservation efforts to ensure that this unique art form remains a vibrant part of China's cultural heritage for generations to come.

Suggestions

Suggestions and Implementations

The findings from this study provide several valuable insights into the preservation, performance, and cultural significance of Changde Gaoqiang, which can guide future efforts to safeguard this important cultural heritage. Based on the results, the following suggestions and recommendations are proposed for both the public and for future research:

Continued Efforts for Protection and Promotion of Changde Gaoqiang

The study emphasizes the need for continued and enhanced efforts to protect and promote Changde Gaoqiang as a vital part of China's cultural heritage. Given its status as an intangible cultural heritage, it is essential to develop comprehensive protection policies and programs to ensure the opera remains a living tradition. Local governments, cultural institutions, and educational organizations should collaborate to: Establish formal training programs for young performers, scholars, and artists to ensure the transmission of knowledge and skills related to Changde Gaoqiang. Develop digital archives to preserve performances, recordings, and documents related to Changde Gaoqiang, making them accessible to a global audience and future generations. Organize cultural festivals and public performances that highlight Changde Gaoqiang, thus raising public awareness of its cultural significance and fostering appreciation for this traditional art form. By doing so, Changde Gaoqiang can maintain its relevance in the contemporary cultural landscape while safeguarding its artistic essence for future generations.

Recognition of the Ritualized Nature of Performance

The findings highlight the profound ritualized nature of Changde Gaoqiang performances, which go beyond mere entertainment to serve as a medium for expressing cultural values and reinforcing collective identity. To further leverage the cultural power of these performances, the following strategies are recommended: Community engagement and involvement: Encouraging local communities to actively participate in Changde Gaoqiang performances will help strengthen the sense of cultural pride and belonging. Community-based performances can deepen the connection between the opera and its audience, reinforcing its symbolic role in expressing

regional identity. Incorporate storytelling in performances: Given the opera's role in conveying cultural narratives, there should be a greater emphasis on using Changde Gaoqiang as a platform for narrating regional stories, folk traditions, and historical events. This will further embed the opera within the cultural consciousness of the community and beyond. Educational programs: Integrating Changde Gaoqiang into school curricula, particularly in the Changde region and other parts of Hunan, will ensure that future generations learn not only about its artistic value but also its cultural and ritualistic significance.

These efforts will ensure that Changde Gaoqiang remains a vibrant and meaningful cultural practice that continues to serve as a medium for storytelling and identity reinforcement.

Emphasizing the Central Role of Music in Cultural Communication

The study underscores the dual role of music in Changde Gaoqiang: as both an aesthetic form of artistic expression and a powerful means of cultural communication. To fully realize the potential of this musical heritage, the following recommendations are proposed: Musical education and research: Establish specialized programs in music schools and universities focused on the study and preservation of Changde Gaoqiang's distinctive musical elements. These programs can explore its melodies, vocal techniques, and dialect integration, providing students with the opportunity to learn directly from masters of the art form. Collaboration with ethnomusicologists and cultural researchers: Future studies should explore the connection between the music of Changde Gaoqiang and broader sociocultural phenomena, such as the impact of globalization and modernization on traditional art forms. These collaborations can further illuminate the role of music in maintaining cultural identity and its function as a form of communication. Documenting musical heritage: Expanding the documentation of Changde Gaoqiang's musical forms through audio and video recordings will ensure the preservation of its unique characteristics. These materials should be made available for study, public access, and educational purposes.

By strengthening the understanding of the relationship between music and cultural identity in Changde Gaoqiang, these efforts can ensure that its music continues to serve as a living tradition, deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of the Changde region.

For Future Research

1. Comparative studies: Future research could compare Changde Gaoqiang with other regional Chinese operas or traditional art forms, examining how similar and distinct musical elements contribute to the preservation of local cultural identities.

2. Impact of modern technology: Investigating how modern technology, such as digital platforms and social media, can be used to promote and preserve traditional forms like Changde Gaoqiang, could yield insights into how these art forms can thrive in the digital age.

3. Longitudinal studies: Long-term studies on the transmission of Changde Gaoqiang across generations would help to understand how the opera evolves over time and how it remains relevant to younger audiences, ensuring its continued vitality.

In conclusion, the preservation and promotion of Changde Gaoqiang require both concerted efforts from cultural institutions and communities, as well as innovative strategies for integrating traditional practices with contemporary societal needs. By implementing these suggestions, Changde Gaoqiang can continue to thrive as a living tradition, enhancing cultural identity and serving as a valuable expression of regional heritage.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines for this study were followed in accordance with the institutional review board (IRB) standards. All participants in interviews and performances provided informed consent, and the study was conducted with the utmost respect for cultural sensitivity and participant privacy.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any financial, personal, or professional affiliation that could inappropriately influence, or be perceived to influence, the research process, interpretation of findings, or publication of results.

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Buddhism and Its Values and Roles

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Buddhism and Its Values and Roles

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Abstract

Buddhism is a philosophical and ethical system that emphasizes the cultivation of individual values and social responsibility to achieve harmony between personal life and communal well-being. This study explores key Buddhist principles—including the Four Noble Truths, the Threefold Training, the Four Divine Abidings (Brahmavihāra), and the Four Means of Sustenance (Saṅgahavatthu)—to illustrate how they foster intrinsic values such as compassion, honesty, and kindness while guiding individuals in fulfilling their societal roles.

Findings indicate that Buddhist teachings not only promote spiritual growth but also enhance mental, ethical, and intellectual dimensions of life. Observing moral precepts cultivates social harmony, mindfulness practices enhance awareness and emotional resilience, and wisdom-based discernment supports rational decision-making. Moreover, the study highlights how these values help address contemporary challenges such as stress, interpersonal conflict, and the erosion of ethical foundations in consumer-driven societies. The results suggest that Buddhist principles offer practical frameworks for self-improvement and sustainable community development by integrating knowledge and ethical wisdom into daily actions. The study concludes that Buddhism serves as a vital tool for balancing personal development with social duties, particularly in contexts that require ethical integrity, social cohesion, and sustainable progress. This research thus proposes the application of Buddhist teachings as a means to enhance quality of life and foster well-being in the modern world.

Keywords: Buddhism; Value; Responsibility; Ethic; Wisdom

Introduction

Buddhism as a religious and philosophical system is rooted in the teachings of the Buddha, evolving continuously for over 2,500 years. These teachings not only reflect profound spiritual insights but also embody values and duties interconnected with individual and societal life in diverse ways. Key issues related to Buddhist values and duties have always attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners, especially in the modern era, where society is facing complex changes.

Values in Buddhism revolve around cultivating ethics and wisdom. The teachings on the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca) (Vin.I.9) and the Noble Eightfold Path (Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga) (D.II.321) are central to fostering mental and intellectual development. The Four Noble Truths elucidate the reality of suffering (dukkha), its causes (samudaya), the cessation of suffering (nirodha), and the path leading to its cessation (magga), emphasizing an understanding of life's nature and personal development to liberate from suffering (Gethin, 2020). Simultaneously, the Noble Eightfold Path advocates a balanced life comprising wisdom, morality, and concentration, promoting peace and harmony on both personal and societal levels.

The duties of Buddhism are not limited to providing spiritual guidance but also play a crucial role in society as a tool for fostering harmony and justice. The Buddha's teachings often highlight the interdependence of all things in nature (paṭiccasamuppāda) (Vin.I.1) and encourage living in mutual support. For instance, the principles of the Four Immeasurables (appamaññā)—loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), sympathetic joy (muditā), and equanimity (upekkhā)—were developed to teach humanity to coexist peacefully and with goodwill toward one another (Harvey, 2018). In modern contexts, Buddhism also significantly contributes to sustainability and ecological balance. The principle of non-violence (ahiṃsā) has been reinterpreted as a guideline for environmental protection and mitigating human impact on nature. Furthermore, the teaching of mindfulness, a component of the Noble Eightfold Path, has become a vital tool in psychological therapy and enhancing quality of life in today's fast-paced digital era (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

An intriguing aspect is the dynamic interpretation of Buddhist values and duties, which adapts according to time and social contexts. For example, the dissemination of Buddhism in Western countries has transformed its content and teaching methods to align with local cultures and the needs of the people. Additionally, in some societies, Buddhism has been utilized as a tool to support political and social movements, such as advocating for human rights in Tibet or promoting peace in Sri Lanka (Queen & King, 2016). Nonetheless, from a philosophical perspective, Buddhism emphasizes the relationship between the individual and society, recognizing that personal happiness and suffering impact society as a whole. Conversely, a just and balanced society fosters individuals' ability to improve their quality of life (Loy, 2018). This perspective positions Buddhism as a conceptual framework capable of addressing ethical and social issues in various contexts.

In summary, Buddhism is more than a religion in a ritualistic sense; it is a path offering profound values and duties relevant to individual and societal life. It emphasizes cultivating virtues and wisdom to achieve lasting happiness. Buddhism's ability to adapt to new contexts ensures the continued relevance of the Buddha's teachings in today's world, whether in spirituality, self-development, or resolving social and environmental issues. This article will explore Buddhist values and duties, reflecting on paradigmatic perspectives on these matters and their application in the context of a changing modern society.

The Role of Core Buddhist Teachings Reflecting Values and Duties

Buddhism emphasizes the balanced development of internal values and the fulfillment of personal responsibilities. Core teachings reflecting such values and duties are clearly evident in doctrines that aim to cultivate self-discipline for peace and prosperity, both on an individual level and within society. The key principles that exemplify this include the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), the Threefold Training (Sikkhā), the Four Sublime States (Brahmavihāra), and the Four Bases of Social Solidarity (Saṅgahavatthu), which collectively serve as foundations for human development in terms of values and responsibilities.

The most prominent teaching in this regard is the Four Noble Truths (Vin.I.9), comprising suffering (dukkha), the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to its cessation. These truths illuminate the process of understanding life's realities, accepting them, and resolving internal issues, particularly in relation to one's responsibilities. The path to the cessation of suffering, articulated through the Noble Eightfold Path (D.II.321), emphasizes living with mindfulness and wisdom, such as Right View (Sammā Diṭṭhi) and Right Intention (Sammā Sāṅkappa). This principle encourages individuals to exercise discernment in decision-making and to lead responsible lives. Such practices not only contribute to personal tranquility but also enhance the quality of life for others and society at large.

The Threefold Training—morality (Sīla), concentration (Samādhi), and wisdom (Paññā)—provides a framework for self-cultivation that encompasses ethical conduct, mental development, and the enhancement of wisdom (D.III.220). Practicing morality, such as refraining from harming others and fulfilling one's roles responsibly, underscores one's duty as a member of society. The cultivation of concentration and wisdom fosters an understanding of life's nature, enabling individuals to let go of attachments and live harmoniously.

Another example is the Four Sublime States—loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karuṇā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā) (D.III.220). These principles emphasize ethical interpersonal relationships, encouraging individuals to regard others with goodwill, empathy, and emotional balance. The Four Sublime States can also be adapted to societal contexts, promoting harmony and reducing conflicts.

In terms of societal responsibilities, the Four Bases of Social Solidarity—generosity (Dāna), pleasant speech (Piyavācā), beneficial conduct (Atthacariyā), and impartiality (Samānattatā)—exemplify the encouragement of unity within communities (D.III.152,232). These teachings

highlight actions conducive to harmonious coexistence, such as providing material support to others (Dāna), using kind and considerate words (Piyavācā), and selflessly helping others (Atthacariyā).

Furthermore, Yonisomanasikāra, or wise reflection, is a principle that fosters intellectual development and creative problem-solving. This teaching underscores the role of Buddhism in promoting analytical thinking and reasoned decision-making, which are critical attributes in an era of increasing social and economic complexities (Phramaha Siwasen, 2020).

It can be argued that the values promoted by Buddhism align with modern psychological and sociological perspectives. Scholars such as Gethin (2020) have noted that Buddhism does not solely aim for individual enlightenment but also seeks to create a balance in daily life that supports coexistence within society. In the contemporary context, these principles can be applied to address societal challenges, such as resolving conflicts, fostering positive relationships in families and workplaces, and establishing intrinsic values that prioritize genuine happiness over external success. Buddhism not only offers ethical guidelines but also instills core human values, such as loving-kindness, compassion, and self-awareness within the broader context of interconnectedness with society and nature. Adhering to these teachings is both a duty and a pathway to creating balanced values in life.

The Ethical Values of Buddhism

Buddhism is more than a system of beliefs or a religion aimed at personal liberation; it serves as a profound ethical framework essential for harmonious coexistence in society. The teachings of the Buddha offer a way of life centered on justice, compassion, and mental cultivation, which can be applied at both individual and societal levels. The ethical values of Buddhism not only foster spiritual balance but also play a pivotal role in addressing contemporary social and environmental challenges.

Buddhist teachings emphasize instilling ethics through practices rooted in wisdom and compassion. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path illustrate a profound approach to resolving human issues, beginning with the understanding of suffering (*dukkha*) and its causes (*samudaya*), and leading to its cessation (*nirodha*) through the right way of life (*magga*). This involves principles such as Right View (*sammā diṭṭhi*) and Right Action (*sammā kammanta*), which guide individuals to make rational decisions, free from prejudice or greed, while respecting others' rights (Gethin, 2020). These teachings stress the use of wisdom to navigate life responsibly, fostering not only personal well-being but also societal harmony.

In the context of societal coexistence, Buddhism promotes ethical values such as compassion, loving-kindness, and non-violence (*ahiṃsā*). The principles of the Four Sublime States (*Brahmavihāras*), including loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), are recognized as fundamental to fostering interpersonal relationships. These principles cultivate an environment conducive to peaceful interdependence (Harvey, 2018). On a broader scale, Buddhism also advocates sustainability and environmental

stewardship. The concept of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which explains the interdependent nature of all phenomena, highlights the mutual reliance between humans and nature (Loy, 2018). Ethical practices, such as abstaining from killing animals and utilizing resources responsibly, can help mitigate environmental impacts and promote long-term sustainability.

In the modern era, the ethical values of Buddhism are being integrated into policymaking and social movements. For instance, the principle of non-violence has been instrumental in peacebuilding efforts in conflict zones and human rights movements, such as those in Tibet led by the Dalai Lama. This demonstrates Buddhism's potential as a tool for addressing structural injustices (Queen & King, 2016). Additionally, in personal development, Buddhist ethics manifest through practices such as meditation and mindfulness. Mindfulness (*sati*) not only enhances awareness of one's thoughts and emotions but also supports ethical decision-making in daily life (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Meditation helps alleviate societal pressures characterized by competition and haste, fostering a calmer, more considerate society.

Overall, the ethical values of Buddhism extend beyond individual happiness to encompass the relationship between individuals and society. Its teachings on compassion and justice form a solid foundation for addressing ethical challenges in today's world, such as environmental degradation, inequality, and societal conflicts. Buddhism underscores that ethics is not merely about adhering to rules but about cultivating the mind and nurturing supportive relationships. The values it advocates are not confined to a specific cultural context but can be universally applied across diverse global settings.

The Spiritual and Intellectual Values of Buddhism

Buddhism is a belief system whose ultimate goal is liberation from suffering or attaining Nirvana. However, in the process of practice to achieve this goal, Buddhism also offers profound spiritual and intellectual values. The teachings of the Buddha focus not only on the cultivation of personal virtues but also on understanding the nature of life and fostering mindfulness in every moment. Thus, Buddhism serves as a source of knowledge that strengthens wisdom and fortifies the mind.

The spiritual value of Buddhism begins with cultivating inner peace through mental training. Meditation is a key practice that enables individuals to confront the turmoil of the mind and discover genuine tranquility. Meditation is not merely a relaxation tool but also a critical foundation for the development of wisdom (Harvey, 2018). Mindfulness helps practitioners become aware of the present moment without clinging to the past or anticipating the future. This process not only alleviates daily suffering but also encourages a meaningful way of living.

From the perspective of wisdom, Buddhism emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature of reality through contemplation and learning. The Four Noble Truths provide a framework for understanding life's truths rationally, starting with acknowledging suffering (*dukkha*), analyzing the causes of suffering (*samudaya*), and striving for the cessation of suffering

(nirodha) through the Eightfold Path (magga) (Gethin, 2020). These teachings are not merely moral guidelines but a process that employs intellect to analyze and resolve issues deeply.

Spiritual values in Buddhism are also reflected in fostering compassion and letting go. Cultivating the mind through the Four Brahmaviharas—loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkha)—strengthens positive social relationships. These principles are not only guides for peaceful coexistence but also help practitioners recognize the interconnectedness of humanity and nature (Loy, 2018). Training the mind to accept change and reduce attachment allows individuals to liberate themselves from suffering and dissatisfaction in life.

In the modern era, the spiritual and intellectual values of Buddhism have gained widespread recognition, particularly in psychological therapy and mental health promotion. Mindfulness practices have been incorporated into therapeutic processes, such as stress reduction and managing depression (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Furthermore, meditation has been applied in education and organizations to enhance work efficiency and personal potential.

Although Buddhism originated in the context of ancient Indian society, the Buddha's teachings have proven adaptable to the evolving modern world. Spiritual concepts such as mindfulness and non-attachment are principles that can be integrated into any culture and society.

In summary, the spiritual and intellectual values of Buddhism extend beyond the individual level and play a significant role in fostering a better society. Buddhist teachings provide wisdom for navigating life's challenges and cultivate a spirit ready to accept the truths of the world with understanding.

The Role of Buddhism as a Tool for Human Development

Buddhism is not merely a religion in the sense of worship but serves as a vital tool for human development in all dimensions, including mental, intellectual, and social aspects. The teachings of the Buddha aim primarily at liberation from suffering; however, they also promote self-understanding and interpersonal relationships through systematic principles adaptable to various circumstances.

Buddhism places great emphasis on mental development through meditation and mindfulness practices. These processes help individuals achieve inner peace, become aware of their emotions, and exercise self-control. Mindfulness, a core principle of Buddhism, has been applied in modern therapeutic processes and personal development. Meditation enhances focus, reduces stress, and improves work efficiency (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). In this context, Buddhism functions as a tool for fostering mental stability and balance.

On the intellectual level, Buddhism emphasizes understanding the nature of life and reality. Concepts like the Four Noble Truths and dependent origination provide frameworks for recognizing the interconnectedness of causes and effects in life. These teachings are not merely philosophical but are practical tools for addressing complex problems on personal and societal

levels (Harvey, 2018). For instance, understanding that suffering arises from attachment can be applied to managing interpersonal conflicts or coping with life's failures.

Another crucial role of Buddhism lies in fostering positive social relationships. The Five Precepts, which advocate abstinence from actions harmful to others, such as killing or lying, serve as foundational principles for a peaceful society. Teachings like the Four Brahmaviharas (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity) encourage individuals to cultivate kindness and reduce conflicts, promoting harmony within communities (Gethin, 2020). On a broader scale, Buddhism can act as a tool for addressing social and environmental issues. Dependent origination highlights the interconnection and mutual dependence between humans and nature (Loy, 2018). Buddhist teachings on mindful resource utilization and environmental responsibility offer solutions for tackling contemporary ecological challenges.

Furthermore, Buddhism plays a significant role in promoting global ethics and morality. For example, movements inspired by the principle of non-violence (ahimsa) advocate peacebuilding, while Buddhist-inspired initiatives support human rights in conflict-ridden regions. These ideas illustrate Buddhism's potential to drive sustainable change (Queen & King, 2016).

In summary, Buddhism holds a vital role as a tool for human development at both individual and societal levels. Its teachings not only aim for spiritual enlightenment but also enable individuals to enhance their capacity to address daily challenges. The development of mind and intellect through profound principles allows people to lead balanced, fulfilling lives and create harmonious, sustainable communities.

The Role of Buddhism in Maintaining Peace in Society

Buddhism has played a significant role in fostering and maintaining peace in society throughout history. Its role is not confined merely to religious rituals or moral teachings but also extends to promoting understanding, fostering unity, and preventing conflicts at both individual and societal levels.

One of the primary approaches of Buddhism in cultivating societal peace is through instilling strong moral principles, particularly via adherence to the Five Precepts. These precepts, which advocate refraining from actions causing suffering, such as killing, lying, and sexual misconduct, form the foundation of harmonious human relationships. The principles of the Five Precepts are not merely personal guidelines but also reflect respect for life and the rights of others, which are critical elements for a peaceful society (Harvey, 2018). Additionally, the teachings of the Four Divine Abidings—loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkha)—further strengthen social bonds. These qualities guide individuals to develop a mindset ready to accept and understand others without judgment, thereby mitigating conflicts. Loving-kindness and compassion not only reduce interpersonal disputes but also promote peaceful coexistence within communities (Gethin, 2020).

On a deeper level, Buddhism contributes to reducing social tensions by propagating the concepts of emptiness (*sunyata*) and letting go. These principles encourage individuals and communities to minimize attachment to ego and divergent perspectives, which are primary causes of societal conflicts. Such ideas can be applied in dispute resolution processes and dialogues aimed at reconciliation (Loy, 2018).

Buddhism also addresses the complexities of modern and ever-changing social contexts. For instance, its advocacy for economic sufficiency and the mitigation of greed provides guidance in addressing economic inequality. Buddhist approaches in this regard not only help bridge social divides but also promote a more equitable society (Queen & King, 2016). In terms of fostering peace on an international scale, Buddhism emphasizes the principle of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) and peaceful coexistence. These principles have been employed in peacebuilding efforts in conflict-ridden areas. For example, Buddhist-inspired peace negotiations in Southeast Asia focus on fostering mutual understanding and trust among groups with differing perspectives. At the individual level, Buddhism encourages mindfulness and meditation practices that equip individuals to face daily challenges with calmness and awareness. These practices not only alleviate stress but also lay a foundation for inner peace, which can radiate outward to contribute to societal tranquility (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

In summary, Buddhism's role in maintaining societal peace is a vital component of building stable and sustainable communities. Buddhist teachings not only aim to cultivate personal morality but also promote understanding and unity at the community and global levels. Principles emphasizing compassion and letting go help reduce conflicts and foster harmonious relationships across all dimensions.

The Value and Role of Buddhism in Addressing Contemporary Social Contexts

Buddhism, as a religion with a history spanning over two millennia, is not merely a moral framework guiding individual conduct but also a vital instrument for addressing modern societal issues. The rapid changes in society—encompassing economic, political, and cultural dimensions—have necessitated Buddhism's role in providing guidance and fostering equilibrium in the community by offering values and functions that meet the needs of humanity in the contemporary era.

Buddhism places great emphasis on mental development through mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. These principles have been widely recognized in the context of personal development and psychological well-being. For instance, mindfulness practices have been integrated into modern medical and psychological fields, particularly in managing chronic stress and anxiety (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Additionally, meditation practices enhance focus and productivity, which are essential in highly competitive societies.

In the social context, Buddhism underscores the importance of fostering harmonious relationships through moral principles, such as the Five Precepts and the Four Sublime States (*Brahmavihāras*). These teachings promote kindness, compassion, and mutual understanding,

which are foundational for peace within communities. Buddhist ethical guidelines not only discourage behaviors that lead to conflict, such as deceit or harm to others, but also encourage a culture of harmonious coexistence (Harvey, 2018).

In addressing economic and environmental challenges, Buddhism highlights the significance of simple living and reducing greed. The concept of the "Middle Way" advocates for the moderate use of resources and an appreciation of what one has. This perspective aligns with sustainable development policies and environmental conservation efforts (Loy, 2018). For example, Thailand's sufficiency economy philosophy, inspired by Buddhist principles, illustrates the practical application of such ideas.

Buddhism also plays a crucial role in peacebuilding. The principles of non-violence (ahimsa) and forgiveness serve as frameworks for resolving conflicts at both individual and societal levels. For instance, peace negotiations influenced by Buddhist thought have been utilized in regions affected by ethnic and religious disputes. Such approaches help foster trust and understanding among groups with differing perspectives (Queen & King, 2016).

On a global scale, Buddhism contributes to promoting contemporary values such as human rights and equality. Its emphasis on respecting the intrinsic value of every individual aligns with modern concepts of freedom and human dignity. Furthermore, Buddhism underscores the interconnectedness of humans and nature, fostering an ecological consciousness critical in addressing the current environmental crisis (Gethin, 2020).

In a rapidly changing society, Buddhism is not merely a tool for maintaining peace but also a conceptual framework adaptable to the development of various societal aspects. The application of Buddhist teachings—such as mindfulness in education, the integration of compassion in justice systems, and the use of the Middle Way in economic policies—demonstrates the flexibility and universality of these principles.

In conclusion, Buddhism holds significant value and plays a crucial role in addressing contemporary challenges. Its teachings, which focus on mental development, fostering social harmony, and promoting mindful living, not only equip individuals to adapt to change but also contribute to building a sustainable and balanced society in all dimensions.

Challenges in Facing Societal Changes

Buddhism, as a religion emphasizing an understanding of the nature of life, plays a pivotal role in helping humanity confront the changes in modern society. Economic, political, cultural, and technological transformations deeply impact both the way of life and the mental states of individuals. In this context, Buddhism holds significant value and responsibility in alleviating suffering, fostering wisdom, and supporting adaptation to new challenges.

A core value of Buddhism lies in perceiving the reality of the world through the three marks of existence: impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta). This principle helps individuals understand that change is a natural part of existence. Recognizing and accepting change reduces anxiety and attachment, which are major sources of suffering in an era where

uncertainty is a defining characteristic of society (Harvey, 2018). Buddhism's essential role in this context is fostering a mindful and balanced society. Practices such as mindfulness and meditation strengthen mental resilience, enabling individuals to respond to change with awareness and without being swept away by the currents of haste or unrealistic expectations. Mindfulness practices have also been adapted in various contexts, such as mental health development, organizational management, and conflict resolution (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

In societies grappling with inequality and injustice, Buddhism underscores the values of compassion and loving-kindness. These principles not only foster harmonious interpersonal relationships but also promote addressing structural issues within society. Applying the four sublime states (brahmaviharas) in public policies or organizational management can mitigate conflicts and foster equity and fairness within communities (Gethin, 2020).

Technological advancements present another significant challenge of the modern era. Buddhism provides a framework that enables individuals to utilize technology ethically and mindfully. The concept of "wise reflection" (yoniso manasikara) can be applied to evaluate the impact of technology on life and society. Balancing technological progress with preserving humanity becomes a domain where Buddhism offers guidance (Loy, 2018).

On a global scale, Buddhism plays a role in addressing environmental crises by teaching respect and coexistence with nature. The Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way advocate for a balanced lifestyle that avoids harming the environment and reduces excessive consumption. This perspective aligns with sustainable development principles, resonating with the needs of contemporary society (Queen & King, 2016).

Moreover, Buddhism can respond to the challenges of multicultural and diverse societies. Principles of coexistence, such as non-violence (ahimsa) and forgiveness, offer pathways to balance in communities characterized by diversity. Peace negotiations in conflict zones, such as in Southeast Asia, often draw inspiration from these teachings.

In summary, Buddhism holds profound value and responsibility in confronting societal changes. Its teachings, emphasizing the acceptance of truth, mental cultivation, and harmonious coexistence, not only enable individuals to adapt in an era where change is constant but also contribute to building a sustainable and ethical society.

Conclusion

Buddhism, as a religion emphasizing the understanding of the nature of life and existence, has demonstrated its resilience and depth in value and function, impacting individuals and society across all eras. Its teachings, which focus on mental development, fostering harmonious relationships, and living in balance with nature, reflect an ethical relationship between individuals and society.

In an era of change, Buddhism is not merely a religion promoting personal tranquility but also plays a critical role in responding to the challenges of the modern world. The ability to apply its teachings—such as mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom—to the contexts of social,

economic, and environmental issues helps create balance in human lives as they face the complexities of today's world. Buddhism supports human development by fostering adaptability to change through recognizing truth via the Three Marks of Existence and the Four Noble Truths. These principles enhance understanding of the nature of life and alleviate suffering caused by attachment. Accepting uncertainty serves as a pathway for individuals to live mindfully and create new values in a perpetually changing society.

Simultaneously, Buddhism acts as a conceptual framework that promotes harmony and peace at both social and global levels. Compassion, loving-kindness, and non-violence are tools for mitigating conflicts and fostering understanding in diverse societies. Furthermore, its emphasis on simplicity and balance offers practical guidance for conserving natural resources and promoting sustainable development.

Thus, Buddhism is not confined solely to the realms of belief or religious rituals but also serves as a tool enabling individuals and societies to live meaningfully in a world filled with complexity and change. Its teachings, rooted in truth, compassion, and balance, make Buddhism a source of values applicable to all dimensions of life, fostering hope and peace in modern society.

Suggestions and Implementations

This study highlights the enduring relevance of Buddhism as a guiding philosophy for individuals and society, particularly in addressing the complexities of modern life. The insights gained from this research contribute to a broader understanding of Buddhism's role in fostering resilience, ethical living, and sustainable development.

New Knowledge and Implementations

Integration of Buddhist Ethics in Social Development – The study reinforces the importance of Buddhist teachings, such as mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom, in creating ethical frameworks for both individual and communal well-being. These principles can be applied in education, leadership, and policymaking to foster a more harmonious and sustainable society.

Application of Mindfulness in Mental Health and Well-being – The research underscores the value of Buddhist mindfulness and meditation practices in promoting emotional resilience and psychological stability. This knowledge can be further developed into structured programs for stress reduction, mental health treatment, and overall well-being.

Buddhist Perspectives on Sustainable Living – The study suggests that Buddhist teachings on simplicity, balance, and interdependence provide a foundation for sustainable environmental practices. This approach encourages mindful consumption, conservation, and policies aligned with ecological harmony.

Recommendations for the Public

Promoting Mindfulness and Ethical Awareness – Individuals can incorporate Buddhist mindfulness and ethical living principles into daily life to enhance self-awareness, reduce stress, and cultivate compassion toward others.

Future Research Directions

1. Buddhism and Digital Transformation – Investigate how Buddhist philosophy can be adapted to modern digital cultures, particularly in guiding ethical technology use and promoting mindful digital engagement.

2. Comparative Studies on Buddhism and Contemporary Psychological Practices – Examine the intersections between Buddhist teachings and modern psychological theories to enhance approaches to mental health and emotional intelligence.

3. Buddhism’s Role in Global Peace and Conflict Resolution – Explore how Buddhist ethics and diplomacy can contribute to resolving international conflicts, promoting non-violence, and fostering intercultural understanding.

4. Buddhism and Environmental Ethics – Further research on how Buddhist sustainability principles can be applied in policy frameworks to address global environmental challenges, such as climate change and resource conservation.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical research principles, ensuring accuracy, integrity, and respect for religious and philosophical perspectives. No human participants were directly involved in this research; therefore, formal ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any financial, personal, professional, or institutional relationship that could inappropriately influence or bias the research process, interpretation of findings, or publication of results.

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