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Lived Experiences of an Only Child

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Abstract

Birth ranking has been used to describe the personality of the eldest, middle, and the youngest child, and how they act the way they do because of the birth order that they were born into. This is not the case for an only child. An only child's personality is said to be more complicated compared to those with siblings. Hence, this phenomenological study aimed to understand the self-perception, lived experiences, issues, and challenges of an only child. Eight participants (five males and three females) ranging from 15-21 years old were chosen through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. One-on-one interviews were conducted utilizing a set of semi-structured self-made interview questions, and then the data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through thematic analysis. Six themes emerged for an only child's lived experiences, namely: academically contented, positive interpersonal relationship, emotionally satisfied, inclined to sports, lack of spiritual convictions, and feels compensated through friends; three themes for an only child's self-perception such as: the priority, lack of companionship, and emotionally weak; two themes emerged for the issues and problems that an only child faces, specifically: sibling issues, and distant relationship with the parents; lastly, two themes emerged for their challenges, particularly, being alone in supporting parents and lack of freedom. This study can be an informative tool to help practitioners in dealing with individuals who are an only child. It is recommended that a deeper study on an only child's performance during adulthood in terms of career and family be done.

Keywords: *only child, pamper, singletons, phenomenological study*

Birth order is the position in which a child is born into a family. Birth order is believed to influence many aspects of one's personality. However, in the cases of an only child, the "solo" children don't have particular rank; they are the eldest and the youngest in the family at the same time. When asked to describe the personality of an only child, many people respond negatively, indicating the presupposition that only children are spoiled brats, dependent to their parents, clingy, stubborn, selfish, egotistical, obnoxious, and lonely (McGrath, 1989).

Only children are often leaders and have a more difficult time going along with others, especially in groups of their peers. Accordingly a typical characteristic of an only child is the carefulness that results from the extreme amount of attention they receive growing up. It is believed that independence, sociableness, responsibility, and thoughtfulness are qualities associated with the only child's position (Gustafson, 2010).

Singletons as Fang (2004) refers the only children "are also known not to have ability to adjust to their environment." Fang (2004) also included in her conclusion that government officials in China established the one-child policy in order to create a generation of "high-quality" people with the resources and ambition to make China competitive in the capitalist world system.

The book *The Seven Common Sins of Parenting an Only Child* by White (2004) has a positive approach on parenting an only child. It was mentioned that an only child's close relationship with parents and the unique relationship they enjoy can enhance the child's capacity for sharing and can increase feelings of loyalty to people in an only child's career, friends, and family.

According to the study of Veenhoven and Verkuyten (1989), among Dutch adolescents, being an only child does not involve greater risk of having an unhappy youth. On average, the singletons in the study appeared to be no less happy or self-accepting. Still, it is possible that only children are at a disadvantage under some conditions. The position of being an only child has detrimental effects on an individual's adjustment, personality, and character. Since parents are more inclined to fulfill demands and expectations of their single-child, only children will turn out to be self-centered, dependent, temperamental, and maladjusted.

However, in comparing adolescent only children with those who have siblings on academic related outcomes and psychosocial adjustment, Mcdermott (2010) found out that apparently, family size has a measurable effect on academic outcomes. A family's overall mental maturity level, undivided resources, and heightened parental responsiveness and care may all have assisted singletons in their schooling.

Polit and Falbo (1988) mentioned that only children are associated with being the most academically successful and diligent; that they are in a unique situation of always being around adults which makes only children prioritized and are well-provided with time and support compared to others. Feist, Feist, and Roberts (2013) pointed out that sometimes expectations about only children enable them to be motivated to do well in school. This is also applied to the eldest child, since they're supposed to take the responsibility of being an example to their siblings. Other factors could be sibling competitiveness.

One of the main reasons so few people choose to have an only one child is that it is widely believed that children do not flourish without siblings. It is thought to render them lonely and to deprive them of opportunities for developing social skills, with the exclusive attention of their parents giving rise to overindulgence and overprotection. Absence of siblings is thought to involve the deprivation of critical learning experiences, while the exclusive attention of parents is said to result in overindulgence and overprotection (Veenhoven & Verkuyten, 1989).

One's ability to accept and cope with personal feelings, as well as emotions experienced by others is defined as emotional well-being. Emotions contribute to almost all aspects of life, at times, even setting course of actions. A child's birth order is the first predictor of how a child will behave, think and feel. Polit and Falbo (1988) assumed that the family is the child's first social circle. A person with a good emotional state is able to deal with life in a positive way and build strong relationships with other people, animals, and things.

Only children do not assign higher value to good grades, popularity, and looks. Yet they do stand out in their lower evaluation of sports. They think others rate them as less good in sports. They also are more likely to think that their parents feel they are not great at sports. Yet they do not perceive themselves having a better reputation in school with peers, parents, and teachers (Veenhoven & Verkuyten, 1989).

These are just a few of what makes an only child a bit complicated compared to those that have siblings. That is why this study aims to know the life of an only child not just on one aspect but with the other aspects as well, to know if they grew up and develop well as human beings and as part of community. Specifically, this study aimed to answer (a) what are the experiences of the only child?; (b) how does an only child perceive himself/herself?; (c) what are the issues or problems that the only child encounters?; and (d) what are the challenges that the only child face?.

Methodology

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of eight "only child" participants (5 male and 3 female) with the age ranging from 15-21 years old, chosen through snowball sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Informed consent was given to the teachers, parents, and participants prior to the conduct of the interview. By utilizing a set of semi-structured and self-made interview questions validated by experts, one-on-one in-depth interviews were made to gather rich information that was deemed essential to the objective of the study.

Results and Discussion

Six themes emerged for an only child's lived experiences, namely: academically contented, positive interpersonal relationship, emotionally satisfied, inclined to sports, lack of spiritual convictions, and feels compensated through friends; three themes for an only child's self-perception such as: the priority, lack of companionship, and emotionally weak; two themes emerged for the issues and problems that an only child faces, specifically: no issues in general, sibling issues, and distant relationship with the parents; lastly, two themes emerged for their challenges, particularly, being alone in supporting parents and lack of freedom.

Experiences of an Only Child

Academically contented. The participants know that they can excel if they push through, but they prefer to be just on the average pace. They are not that competitive, but they know that they can excel if they work hard.

On one hand, Participant 3 mentioned *"It was alright, I still excel in school..."* proving that only children can concentrate and study well for there are no siblings who would bother or annoy them. On the other hand, Participant 6 doing well in school is one way to have parents notice an only child.

"It was alright, I pass but I do not excel much... I don't really aim for a high grade as long as I pass." Participant 1 said. The same sentiment goes for Participant 4 who responded that *"It was alright, sometimes I get high scores sometimes I have low scores."*

The responses of the eight participants regarding academic contentment showed that most of the singletons found themselves average, which at some point, contradicted the study of Feist, Feist, and Roberts (2013) that the firstborn children and only children are perceived to be academically achievers.

A study conducted comparing only children with those who have a sibling showed results that for all three academic related outcomes—educational expectations, time spent on homework and grades—there is no significant difference between singletons and firstborns who have any number of younger siblings. Singletons do not differ from laterborns from small families (two-child families) either but are better than later borns from medium to large families (three-or-more-child families) in reporting higher educational expectations and getting better grades (Chen & Liu, 2014).

The result implies that only child has average performance in terms of academics, yet studies shows that they excel. This might be due to the circumstance that they were asked about how they perceive themselves when it comes to their academic performance. The researchers did not take account of their GPA and did not reference credible people, such as their professors, dean, or classmates about their performance academically.

Positive interpersonal relationships. The interpersonal relationship of only children revolves around parents and friends. They have a big impact on the life experiences of only children. Under this theme, two sub-themes were considered.

Positive relationship with friends. Five out of the eight participants showed that they do not encounter any problem when it comes to social conformity or relationship with others. They have good communication with their friends and families. The other three, however, showed that they were shy to make friends at first, but can become more expressive in time.

"I have a lot of friends." Participant 1 answered.

Participant 4 proved that he/she has no problem with conforming to others stating that *"Wala akong problema makibagay."* (I don't have a problem to orientate.).

Participant 8 says that he is shy at first but eventually adapts to other people and communicates well with them.

The result implies that the only child can establish good relationship with their friends, even if in some ways they tend to be shy when in public or during some social activities.

Positive relationship with family. Upon mentioning that *"I did not have many friends during elementary and high school because I was bullied a lot. But I did not have any difficulties with my family relationships..."*, Participant 7 confirmed that he/she is close to both of his/her parents and that they are still

together. Even though he/she was bullied and does not have good experience with her classmates and only has a few friends, his/her relationship with his/her parents provided him/her the support and it compensated for the lack of good interpersonal relationship with other people. Living with both parents, as mentioned by Participant 1, improves the overall development of the child.

The theory of Adler as cited in Feist, Feist, and Roberts (2013) argued that only children have a more difficult time going along with others, especially in groups of their peers. Only children may lack well-developed feelings of cooperation and social interest, possess a parasitic attitude, and expect other people to pamper and protect them. This explanation is justified due to the fact that only children grew up by themselves and they are used to being the center of attention in the house. In the other hand, the lack of company, in this case a sibling will let the only children seek for friends and companions in replacement for a brother or a sister.

Emotionally satisfied. The results showed that the only child's emotional aspects are met and that they are satisfied with it. Participants 7 and 8 mentioned that even though they can't have everything in life, they don't have a hard time sharing their problems with their parents; while Participants 1, 2, and 3 ascertained that they are happy individuals that even their friends approved of the claim.

Pickhardt (2009) stated in an article that the only child gets the entire social, emotional, and material resources their parents have to provide. The article argued that, "only children tend to be powerfully parented well attached to parents and well nurtured by them, the only child receives a lot of parental attention, affection, acceptance, and approval that probably contribute one of the more consistent research findings that major researcher about only children." This also showed consistency on their study; they might have no sisters or brothers but since they're given much attention from their parents, they end up having satisfied emotional needs.

Inclined to sports. This theme reflects the physical, sports, and/or outdoor activity of the participants in which they shared how engaged they are in sports. Answers showed that singletons are active in sports since this is one of the ways where they can interact with others.

Participants 1 and 6 are both volleyball varsity players; Participant 5 is more into basketball yet can play any other sports except swimming; Participant 8 shared that "I'm athletic" and has experienced playing all possible sports that fits him/her; while Participant 5 is a well-versed softball player.

The results showed that six out of the eight participants are engaged in sports activities. Outdoor play also offers singletons opportunities to explore their community; enjoy sensory experiences with dirt, water, sand, and mud; find or create their own places for play; collect objects and develop hobbies; and increase their liking for physical activity. Vigorous outdoor play activities is said to increase the growth and development of the fundamental nervous centers in the brain for clearer thought and increased learning abilities (Clements, 2004).

Lack of spiritual convictions. Commitment is an action taken by people in response to God. Non-committal doesn't necessarily mean that they are not spiritually connected with God, but they are just not that committed or "lukewarm" in the Biblical sense. The results on our data gathering showed that, only children are not that fully spiritually committed. When ask about their spiritual life, the participants have mirroring answers; one response reflects another's, and another's.

Participant 7 mentioned that he has an "up and down" spiritual commitment reflecting to Participant 3's response:

"Pinapraktis dun yung worship. Pag sabado, masyadong nagiging banal. Ta's pag school days parang nawawala na." (Worship is being practiced. I seem to be hoplier on Saturdays but my spirituality seem to fade throught the week.)

Most answers stated that they have an "OK" spiritual commitment. Studies regarding the spirituality of only-children specifically have not been focused yet. Christian commitment can best be defined by starting with God's examples: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16). Vitrano (2008) cited that loving God does not allow people to end only on going to church but having that connection with Him, all the time. However,

as the interview went on during the data gathering, the participants showed that their spirituality sometimes to falter.

Feels compensated through friends. The following are the verbatim statements from the participants who sought the sense of completeness through friends.

Participant 1: *"...I have many friends in school."*

Participant 2: *"... I have cousins who are only child."*

Participant 3: *"... even though I don't have siblings I think to myself that I have a lot of friends and they are like siblings to me."*

Participant 4: *"even though deep inside I'm sad I tend to be happy when I'm outside like in school for example, where I have my friends."*

Participant 5: *"even though I'm alone I know I can be happy because maybe that's why God gave me a lot of friends because He knows that I tend to get sad when I'm alone."*

Participant 6: *"...you have to find people whom you can treat as your brothers and sisters..."*

Participant 7: *"...close with parents. I don't have a problem sharing with parents."*

Participant 8: *"I have a lot of friends but I have a closer circle of friends."*

An Ohio State survey of more than 13,000 children found that only children had as many friends as anyone else; many of the only children interviewed had cherished and nurtured friendships that they often regarded with a familial sense of permanence and loyalty (Sandler, 2013). The respondents' statements showed that they sometimes feel lonely, hence, they treasure friends and that they like to make friends and be more sociable.

An Only Child's Perception Self

The priority. Being the only child at home, with mostly adults as the companion, allows singletons to be the center of attention since there are no younger ones in the house. The results showed that only-children found themselves advantageous in the sense that they are the priority of their family, since they are the only child that their parents needed to attend to.

They found that when it comes to material things and even on the attention from their parents, they don't have anyone to share them with; and this is one of the reasons why other people would say that they are spoiled brats since they are always used to having what they want.

In not having siblings, Participant 7 shared, *"Well I don't have to share the love of my parents and the things they give me"*, as the advantage of an only child.

"You have all of your parents' attention to yourself..." Participant 8 commented, adding that an only child is the only focus of parents.

Participant 3 thought that an only child is also advantageous as being prioritized in expenses (e.g., allowance, school fees, material needs and wants, etc.) as he/she mentioned, *"I don't have any rivals.... Especially when it comes to allowances."* Participants 2 and 3 declared the same position as the top priority in the family without a rival.

Singletons may receive more parental attention. Having siblings, on the other hand, may necessitate learning how to share parents, toys, and a room which is, in-and-of-itself, an important life lesson. Pickhardt (2009) reaffirmed an only child is first and last child in one and so is the only chance at parenting the parents get. Thus, parents take this charge very seriously, because they want to do right for their child.

Lack of companionship. Although singletons find companionship with friends outside, they feel the lack of companionship at home. The results of this study showed that singletons long for companions since they are the only children in the house. Their parents need to work and the length of time until their parents return home makes singletons long for companionship. Moreover, they don't have someone of the same age that they can talk to.

Participant 3 mentioned that when he/she doesn't feel like going anywhere, his/her option is to only stay at home without anyone to interact with. As reinforcement, Participant 4 complained that *"I have*

no one to play with aside from my cousins.” Participant 5 even mentioned that *“wala man lang akong malapitan agad”* (I don’t have anyone to approach right away) whenever problems arise. The same were the sentiments shared by Participants 6 and 7 when they mentioned *“I have no one to lean on”* and *“It’s lonely at times. And you don’t have siblings to talk to when you’re sad”*, respectively.

Five out of the eight participants stated that their disadvantage when it comes to not having siblings is the lack of companionship. The results of a study conducted in UK, through an interview with eight only children participants, revealed that the downside part of being singletons is the bent to boredom when they don’t have anyone to play with. However, the study concluded that singletons can cope up with it; they learn how to be alone and they discover what they should do (Moore, 2011). Furthermore, Pickhardt (2013) mentioned that singletons often want and win a close circle of friends to create a sense of sibling family that singletons never had.

Emotionally weak. There are times when the participants see themselves as emotionally weak especially when it comes to their own self-perception within their families.

“Physical po masaya pero sa emotional malungkot” (Physically happy but not emotionally) was Participant 4’s response. The participants also mentioned that outward happiness is just their defense mechanism to hide how their brokenness.

“I’m emotionally weak...” Participant 5 admitted. Participant 5 added that emotional fragility is his/her weakest point. He/she also mentioned that he/she feels envious upon seeing other friends who have siblings and portray a happy family. Participant 6 pities himself/herself for not having siblings.

These results implied that in spite of the attention given to them and all the material things provided for them, singletons still see themselves as emotionally weak. They tend to pity themselves because they don’t have siblings especially when they are alone. Another prominent difficulty of singletons is their capability to handle their achievements and failures. They feel heavily stressed and unable to cope with challenges. One study showed that singletons were more likely to have internalization of problems which may eventually lead to depression (Krynen, 2011).

Issues and Problems Encountered by an Only Child

Sibling issues. Three sub-themes emerged concerning sibling issues.

Still longing for siblings. This theme reflects the issues faced by singletons in their family. Some factors that may have resulted for them to be an only child are: separated parents, brought up by a single-parent, a parent works abroad, inability of parents to produce another child, etc. A common question asked to an only child is if they ever asked or still ask for a sibling. Two of the eight participants still long for a sibling until now.

“Always, until now” Participant 5 confirmed stating that having a younger sibling would be fun. The same goes for Participant 6 who said, *“Yes, since I was a kid, for security purposes.”* According to Krynen (2011), singletons often express the desire to have siblings, specifically a brother who could have led them through their adolescent years. The participants showed that they still want a sibling for security purposes which is supported by McGrath (1989), *“there are plenty of brothers and sisters who stand by each other throughout life... siblings can be an elegant safety net.”* (p.94). Singletons don’t have anyone else to confide in; there’s nobody to fight back with, hence, they long for a sibling.

Not asking for siblings anymore. Some singletons, at a very young age asked for siblings for playmate or companionship purposes, but as they grow and learn how to embrace the fact that they will only have friends, parents, and relatives around them, they later do not yearn for siblings anymore.

When asked about having siblings, Participants 1, 4, and 8 stated that they asked for a sibling when they were around 5-7 years old, but not anymore. They added that they were already over asking for siblings since they are already grown-ups. Johnson (2014) disclosed that it is normal for singletons to try to imagine, once in a while, having siblings; nevertheless, they embrace the reality of being the only child in the family.

Never asked for a sibling. Participants 2, 3, and 7 were already satisfied of being an only child. They enjoy the advantages and benefits that come with not having siblings. They mentioned that they never

asked for a sibling. They stated that they are used to being alone, and they don't feel the need for a sibling. Participant 3 even added that another sibling would mean additional expense.

While most of the literatures mention that singletons are looking for siblings for varied reasons, the results on this study showed that not all of them do. Some of them are comfortable with themselves that they tend to look upon their status as natural and consider the absence of siblings advantageous. Jim Shaw, the assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Massachusetts cited that *"When I was growing up, I didn't know a brother or sister who had a kind word to say about a sibling. I never saw that I was missing anything..."* (pp. 100-101).

Distant relationship with the parents. The following responses from the participants showed their detached relationship with one or both of their parents.

Participant 2: *"...my dad is a seaman..."*

Participant 3: *"my parents are not separated just distant from each other. I'm not close with my father, if I can remember I only saw him thrice."*

Participant 4: *"...my father is in Mindanao."*

Participant 5: *"I have a broken family."*

Participant 6: *"I don't have the typical parents that support me...I'm not emotionally attached to my parents."*

Veenhoven and Verkuyten (1989) found out in their study that broken homes occur more frequently among the singletons. In their study, there are, however, no significant two-way interaction effects between only child and broken homes. They also stated that parents of only children are more likely to be involved in work outside the home, however, the children of working mothers report somewhat higher life satisfaction and hedonic level—for both singletons and non-singletons, and female singletons in particular. Employment of the father is also associated with greater well-being of singletons, mostly among girls.

Challenges That an Only Child Face

Alone in supporting parents. Some may see them as lucky to be singletons and not to have siblings to share anything with especially when it comes to family support and materials but what takes toll on them is the effort and time they have to provide for their parents when they get old and unable to support themselves. Singletons would have the dilemma of doing things for themselves and their new-built families or their aged parents who depend on them since no other siblings would be there to take turns in taking care of the aged parents. It would be twice the investment the parents provided the singletons when it comes to money, time, and effort.

Participant 5 answered that *"...you're an only child so you're all that your mom could depend on..."* relating the situation of not having a sibling to help him/her.

In the study of Krynen (2011) it was stated that:

A study in China, found that for only children having to support families, only an elite job [could] supply enough income to enable one person to support so many dependents. In effect, only children often feel immense pressure to succeed, seek undivided attention from others, experience problems with connecting and negotiating with peers, and worry about later life issues such as parental care giving and death of parents (pp. 10-14).

Lack of freedom. Singletons are mostly known for having all the attention, care, and love of their parents for themselves but the underlying challenge for the child is the lack of freedom bestowed by parents to them.

Participant 8 expressed his/her feeling of being over-protected by saying, *"...sometimes you feel like you are choked by too much attention from your parents."*

Participant 2 shared that singletons cannot always do what they want to because parents tend to be too strict, *"they become overprotective when it comes to you, where you can't do what you want because they're scared of losing you."*

Only children are also predisposed to many negative connotations due to images of over-protective and over-involved parents that seek to live vicariously through their child that may affect their development (Polit & Falbo, 1988).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The life of singletons may be different than others who have siblings; despite that difference, they are not entirely applicable to singletons. They are said to be not sport engaged, yet the study showed that they are the opposite. Also, it was stated that they would have a hard time being sociable due to growing up only with their parents, yet the results showed that they are friendly despite being introverted. They, however, lack spiritual convictions.

Furthermore, they see themselves advantageous because they are the priority, yet disadvantageous because they lack companionship. Even if they are satisfied when it comes to their emotions, they still see themselves as emotionally weak; however, they don't have an issue or problem that is distinct with others who have siblings.

Results also revealed that singletons can be at risk of being pampered. Some cases of upbringing might enable them to develop personalities that they can have what they want, especially if the parents have well-compensated jobs.

This study could be an informative tool to help practitioners know more about the individuals they are dealing with especially if the individuals are singletons. This study also leads to more paths for further research. It is important to continue studying about the only child and other birth orders beyond adolescence and examine how they perform in their adult roles in career and family. Future research should shed light on whether the only child advantages and other factors that develop upon growing up, such as their academics and sociability during adolescence and early adulthood.

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Psychological Preparedness of Grade 11 Students Towards Success in Senior High School

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Abstract

To be at par with other countries' educational system, the K to 12 launched in 2012 was fully implemented nationwide in 2016. Doubtful concerning the Senior High psychological preparedness, researchers surveyed 121 Grade 11 students aged 15-20 from two private and one public schools in Quezon City where 80 (66%) are females and 41(34%) are males representing STEM (26%), ABM (25%), TVL (23%), HUMSS (15%), SMAW (6.%), BP (3%) and GA (2%) tracks. Four dimensions: adaptability, self-efficacy, motivation, and goal-orientation were examined using 20-item four-point Likert scale at Cronbach's alpha 0.82. Findings revealed that students possess moderate level of motivation (mean 3.37 and SD of 0.69), adaptability (mean 3.36 and SD 0.63), goal orientation (mean 3.22 and SD 0.63) and self-efficacy (mean 3.00 and SD 0.71) with overall mean of 3.26 and SD 0.67. Similar results were obtained when respondents were disaggregated by track, gender and school type however, those under TVL, male and enrolled in public were found to have the lowest self-efficacy relative to their counterpart. To raise the level of self-efficacy, responsiveness to the students' needs were recommended. Further studies should see whether significant differences between groupings under track, gender, and type exist.

Keywords: *K-12, Philippines education, psychological traits*

“Evaluation is a process of providing useful information about personnel, programs, institution, curricula and services for the purpose of assessing their merit and worth” (Madaus, Scriven & Stufflebeam, 1983). As new programs arise in the field of education, there is a need to examine its worth and monitor its effects on the clients.

Background of the study

The Senior High School program is a milestone in the history of the Philippine educational system. Its objective is to provide mastery in learning for according to the DepEd these are the best years for learning. To be at par with other countries' 12- year curriculum and to be accepted globally, the K to 12 which was launched in 2012, started full implementation of the Senior High School in 2016. This current trend created enthusiasm on the part of educators, and researchers to see concrete results of the K to 12 program implementation and to identify its direct effects on the students. With this in mind, the researcher conducted a survey from one public and two private Senior High Schools in the National Capital Region to find out the psychological preparedness of 121 Senior High School students towards their success in the program. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What psychological traits do the senior high school students have?
2. How psychologically prepared are the SHS students when disaggregated by the following variables?
 - a. Track group
 - b. Gender
 - c. Type of school

Significance of the study

The results of this study of the Senior High School students is deemed beneficial for the school administrators and the teaching personnel as the information obtained can provide a direction in the school management decisions, improve instruction and guidance, and assist in an effective implementation of the current curriculum. It would also be beneficial to the parents as they become aware and more responsive to the needs of the students. The youth is the hope of the land according to Rizal. These young people must be molded and properly guided as they take a step in preparing for life as future professionals, leaders and workers.

Scope and delimitation

The study only examined the four dimensions of psychological preparedness, which are adaptability, self-efficacy, motivation, and goal-orientation of the SHS students towards achieving success in the program. It did not include an assessment of their academic performance, personality and socio-economic status. Moreover, through the students' profile, the study has attempted to identify the condition of the respondents in terms of age, gender, number of siblings in the family, educational attainments and occupation of the parents, the students' choice of track, their plans after high school, and even their desire to stay or transfer school.

Related Literature

According to Madaus, Scriven and Stufflebeam (1983) an educational evaluation study is one that is designed and conducted to assist some audience to judge and improve the worth of some educational object. There are various methods from which an evaluator can choose from to do it. Program evaluation in education seeks not only to assess the worth of an educational program but also to improve systems of management, teaching and learning based on the standards of utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy.

The K to 12 Program and Its Implementation

The school year 2016-2017 marked the official start of the Senior High School Program in the whole country. This development altered the ten-year basic education curriculum thus, making a history in the Philippine educational system. According to the Department of Education (DepEd), the K to 12 program covers 13 years of basic education with the following key stages: Kinder to Grade 3; Grade 4-6; Grade 7-10 (Junior High School) and Grade 11 and 12 as the Senior High School.

One of the reasons for the implementation of 12 years of education is that the Philippines is the last country in Asia and one of only three countries worldwide with a 10 year pre-university cycle (Angola & Djibouti are the other two). Other reasons are: A 12-year program is found to be the best period for learning under basic education. It is also the recognized standard for students and professionals globally.

Several preparations had been done prior to its implementation. In the school year 2011-2012 the universal kindergarten implementation began; SY 2012-13 the enhanced curriculum for grades 1-7 was implemented; in 2013, K to 12 was enacted into law; in 2014 the curriculum for grade 11-12 was finished and the year 2015 was used in preparation for the implementation of Senior High School in 2016-2017.

According to the law, beginning SY 2016-2017 one must go to grades 11 and 12 to graduate from high school. Furthermore, the DepEd reported that 66,813 classrooms had been built from 2010-2013 while 33,608 classrooms were completed and were undergoing construction in 2014. The department also planned to establish 5,899 Senior High Schools nationwide.

As of April 2015 DepEd has issued provisional permits to 1,866 private schools set to offer Senior High School in 2016. Currently, there are 2,199 private schools cleared to offer SHS. From 2010-2014 DepEd has filled 128,105 new teacher items and it is targeting two kinds of teachers: those who will teach the core subjects and those who will teach the specialized subjects per track. DepEd aims to hire 37,000 teachers for the Senior High School in 2016 alone.

SHS is offered free in public schools and there will be a voucher program in place for public Junior high school completers should they choose to take the senior high school in private institutions. This means that the burden of expenses for an additional two years need not be completely shouldered by parents.

The SHS Curriculum. The K to 12 curriculum is standards-and competence-based. It is inclusive and built around the needs of the learners and the community. It is the first time in history that the entire curriculum is digitized and made accessible to the public. The current curriculum has been enhanced to give more focus on mastery of learning. For Grades 11 and 12, core subjects such as Math, Science and Language will be strengthened. Specializations or track in students' areas of interest are also offered. Senior High School covers eight learning areas as part of its curriculum and adds specific tracks (similar to college courses) based on four disciplines. These are:

- Academic (which includes Business, Science & Engineering, Humanities & Social Science, and a General Academic Strand)
- Tech-Voc Livelihood (with highly specialized subjects and TESDA certification)
- Sports
- Arts and Design

Senior High School students may pick a track based on how they will want to proceed after high school graduation. Two more years of High School aims to equip learners with skills that will better prepare them for the future, whether it be employment, entrepreneurship, skills development (Tech-Voc Training) or higher education (college) according to the DepEd.

With the changes, the researcher wants to know: (a) How the Senior High School students will face the challenges? (b) Are they optimistic to finish the SHS? (c) What is their attitude towards the SHS program?

Attitudes of senior high school students.

The dictionary defines attitude as a manner, disposition, or feeling with regard to a person or thing; a tendency or orientation especially of the mind which can be either positive or negative. In choosing a career path and in pursuing educational goals for future development in life, a positive outlook and right attitude are important. Motivation, self-efficacy, adaptability and goal-orientation are vital for young learners in order to succeed. In a study made by Win (2012) she found a significant relationship between classroom management practices and student behavior and attitude towards learning English.

Motivation. Motivation is literally the desire to do things. Cherry (2016) defines motivation as a process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behavior. It is what causes a person to act. Motivation involves the biological, emotional, social and cognitive forces that activate behavior. In everyday usage, the term motivation is frequently used to describe why a person does something. There are three major components of motivation, activation, persistence, and intensity. Activation involves the decision to initiate behavior. On the other hand, persistence refers to the continued effort toward a goal, even though obstacles may exist. For instance, a student may show persistence to earn a degree which requires significant investment of time, energy and resources. Lastly, intensity can be seen in the concentration and vigor that goes into pursuing a goal.

A study made by **Mensah & Atta (2015)** used a phenomenological lens to explore middle level classroom goal perceptions and classroom experiences that were pivotal in motivating students to achieve their learning goals. A total of 46 participants (31 students and 15 teachers) from two middle schools in a Midwestern city participated in focus group discussions and one-on-one interview sessions respectively. Findings indicated that teachers endorsed long-term goals with mastery emphasis. However, students' classroom goals were more of performance and less mastery oriented. In addition, thematic analyses of the participants' perspectives showed that: classroom lessons that are more engaging, teachers' positive disposition and personality, personal connection with learning experience, application of varied instructions, and supportive teacher relationships are key classroom experiences in driving middle school level students to achieve their learning goals.

Dana (2013) examined the influence of two different learning contexts based within self-determination theory on the motivation and affect of 79 secondary PE students. The result of the study indicated that engagement in a highly autonomy supportive learning context significantly engaged students' overall motivation, need for competence and enjoyment.

Self-efficacy. The term self-efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. Students with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments, and attribute failure to things which are in their control, rather than blaming external factors. Self-efficacious students also recover quickly from setbacks, and ultimately are likely to achieve their personal goals.

Students with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, believe they cannot be successful and they are less likely to make a concerted, extended effort and may consider challenging tasks as threats that are to be avoided. Thus, students with poor self-efficacy have low aspirations which may result in disappointing academic performances becoming part of a self-fulfilling feedback cycle (Kirk, 2016).

In a study that included 286 high school students enrolled in three schools who attended a biology course in Turkey, Aydin (2016) found that the use of metacognitive strategies and self-efficacy made a positive and significant prediction of students' intrinsic motivation to learn biology. Yuksel and Geban (2016) study investigated science and math course achievements of vocational high school students in the scope of self-efficacy and anxiety. Results showed that academic self-efficacy perceptions of students predicted achievement in physics, chemistry and math courses.

Adaptability. Adaptability means the ability to adjust oneself readily to different conditions or adapt efficiently and fast to changed circumstances. An adaptable person is one who is open to new ideas and concepts, to working independently or as part of a team and to carrying out multiple tasks. The need for adaptability has never been greater than it is now. The ability for people and organizations to adapt to changes in their environments, stay relevant to avoid obsolescence which is the defining characteristic between success and failure, growth and stagnation. Boss (2015) enumerated 14 signs of an adaptable person. Some of these are: open to change, seek opportunity, think ahead, resourceful, don't whine, don't claim fame, curious, stay current, see systems and are willing to listen to the other's point of view.

Buyukgoze-Kavas (2016) made a study on predicting career adaptability from positive psychological traits among 415 undergraduate students in Turkey. Results from the simultaneous multiple regression analysis indicated that career adaptability was significantly predicted by hope, resilience and optimism.

Goal -orientation. Goal -orientation can be associated with motivation and self-efficacy. The Cambridge dictionary describes a goal-oriented person as one who works hard to achieve good results in the tasks. These people have the strict mindset of what they want to achieve. Goal-oriented personalities focus on concrete goals and the things they hope to accomplish because they are concerned with productivity and efficiency.

A study made by Soltaninejad (2015) examined the relationships between achievement goal orientations and learning strategies among 350 public high school students in Iran. The results showed that achievement goal orientations were significant determinants of learning strategies.

In another study done among 201 students from state and private schools in Turkey, Turkcapar (2015) found that there are significant differences in students' achievement goal orientation scores in favor of state school students and of those who come from low socioeconomic level.

Gafoor and Kurukkan (2014) investigated the relationship between parenting style and goal orientation among 365 boys and 467 girls in higher secondary schools in Kerala, India. The findings implied that parents can influence the students' goal orientation by promoting their children to set goals other than performance avoidance by changing their styles of parenting. Mothers' responsiveness and control have more crucial relation with goal orientation of students and hence mothers can do more in this respect.

A multilevel analysis on the relationship between learning strategies and goal orientation made by Kadioglu and Uzuntiryaki (2014) found performance- approach and mastery- approach goals positively predicted students' learning strategies.

Method

Sample

A total of 121 students from one public and two private schools was used as sample for this study. Eighty-two of the participants are males and thirty-nine are females with an age range from 15 to 23. School A is exclusively a school for girls with 28 participants. School B is a public school with 67 participants and among this group, 39 are males and 28 are females. School C is a private school, which used to be a girls' school, but at present it accepts male students too. Out of 26 participants from this school, 1 is a male and 25 are females. All in all, there were 40 males and 81 female participants in the study.

The table below shows the profile of the sample. Among the three schools, School B had the highest percentage of respondents ($f = 67.56\%$), followed by Schools A ($f = 28.23\%$) and C ($f = 26, 21\%$), respectively.

Table 1.

Profile of the Sample According to Gender (n = 121)

School	Male	Female	%
A	0	28	23
B	39	28	56
C	1	25	21
Total	40	81	100

School. There were three schools that participated in the study. Table 2 shows the profile of the senior high schools (SHS). Schools A and C are private and School B is a public school. All the schools are located in the National Capital Region. School A started its SHS implementation in 2015 offering the academic track with two strands namely the Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS). Similarly, School B offers academic track, with STEM, HUMMS, and Business and Management Accounting (ABM) as their strands. Only School C has two offered tracks which are the academic, technological, and livelihood track. When it comes to the start of implementation, School A has been implementing the curriculum for two years while schools B and C started to offer SHS in 2016.

Table 2.

Profile of the Three Senior High Schools

School	Location	School Type	Year Started	Track/s Offered	Strand
A	NCR	Private	2015	Academic	STEM, HUMSS
B	NCR	Private	2016	Academic	ABM, STEM, HUMMS
C	NCR	Private	2016	Academic	STEM, GA, TVL, SMAWBP

Note: National Capital Region (NCR), Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMMS), Business and Management Accounting (ABM), General Academic (GA), Shielded Material Arc Welding (SMAW), Bread and Pastry (BP), and Technical Vocational Livelihood (TVL).

Data collection method. Only one instrument was used in the study. This is a researcher-made two-part questionnaire for Grade 11 students. Part I is about the students' present track which include questions on student's current status in their track such as options to stay on the side track, stay in the present school, and plans after graduation. In Part 2 students are required to respond to a 20-item scale regarding their psychological preparedness towards the SHS program. Table 3 shows the Table of Specifications (ToS) for the said scale. The psychological preparedness scale consists of four dimensions which are adaptability, goal-orientation, motivation and self-efficacy. Each dimension is composed of five items. Students' feelings about their adaptability to schools were measured in items 1, 5, 9, 13, and 17. For feelings toward goal-orientation items 2, 6, 10, 14, and 18 were used. The motivation aspect of SHS students was measured in items 3, 7, 11, 15, and 19. Lastly, students' self-efficacy was measured in items 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20.

Table 3.

Table of Specifications for the Psychological Preparedness in SHS (PPSHS) Scale

Dimensions	Number of Items	Item Placement	Percentage
Adaptability	5	1, 5, 9, 13, 17	25
Goal-Orientation	5	2, 6, 10, 14, 18	25
Motivation	5	3, 7, 11, 15, 19	25
Self-Efficacy	5	4, 8, 12, 16, 20	25
Total	20	20	100

In the scale, participants were asked to rate their degree of agreement or disagreement to each of the statement. A score of four (4) corresponds to Strongly Agree and score of one (1) corresponds to Strongly Disagree. There are 10 statements that are negatively stated and are scored in a reversed manner. The researcher developed five items for each dimension of the Psychological Preparedness in SHS scale. A faculty of UP College of education who is an expert in psychology, research, and evaluation conducted the content validation of the instrument. After the content validation, the statements were translated into Filipino language. The statements are then grouped according to dimension and length. Analysis revealed that the instrument is reliable for the study with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82.

Procedure. Permission from the School Division Superintendent was obtained prior to the data collection. The researcher coordinated with the selected schools and made an arrangement on the schedule for the conduct of the questionnaire. On October 11, 2016, the researcher administered the questionnaire for students in two SHS. The Grade 11 students from School C were the first to respond to the questionnaire. The assigned SHS classroom was used for this purpose and the students responded to the questionnaire in 20 minutes. The researcher also went to School A where a classroom was prepared for the administration of the questionnaire. A separate day was used for data collection in School B. On October 24, the questionnaire was administered to Grade 11 students of school B where the students responded to the questionnaire in 20 minutes. The details of data collection are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4.

Schedule of Administration of Questionnaire

Date	School	Time	Number of Respondents
October 11	C	9-11:00am	Grade 11 (n = 67)
October 11	A	11:30-12:00am	Grade 11 (n = 28)
October 24	B	2:00-3:00pm	Grade 11 (n = 26)

Data Analysis

To answer the research question regarding the personality traits of students towards their success in SHS program, the mean and standard deviation were employed. For research question 2 on students' psychological preparedness as disaggregated by chosen track, gender, and type of school, mean and standard deviation were also employed.

Results

Demographic profile. This section describes the characteristics of the total sample of Grade 11 Senior High School students. Table 5 shows that female students represent 66% ($f = 80$) of the total number of students. They outnumbered the male students, which were only 34% ($f = 41$) of the total number of participants. Overall, the biggest age group was the 15-17 year olds, representing 78% ($f = 94$) of the total participants and followed by the 18-20 year olds which was 21% ($f = 25$). Lastly, more than half of the Grade 11 students are enrolled in the academic track ($f=83$, 9%) compared to those who are in TVL track ($f = 38$, 31%).

Table 5.

Profile of SHS Students ($n=121$)

Variables	<i>f</i>	Total %
Gender		
Male	41	34
Female	80	66
Age		
15-17	94	78
18-20	25	21
21-23	2	1
Track		
Academic	83	69
TVL	38	31

Figure 1 on the other hand, shows the distribution of Grade 11 students by strand. From Figure 1, it can be noted that the strand with the most number of students is the STEM ($f = 46$, 36%) HUMSS ($f = 32$, 26%) and followed closely by ABM ($f = 31$, 26%). Strands with less than 10% of the sample are the SMAW (7%), BP (3%), and GA (2%).

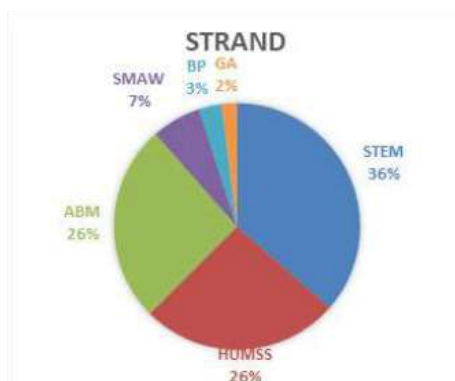


Figure 1. Distribution of the Grade 11 Students

Table 6 shows the information on the present status of students in their strand. More than half of the respondents came from the same school where they are currently enrolled in SHS ($f = 75$, 67%). Less than one fourth were new students in their current SHS ($f = 29$, 24%). The majority of the students chose their track ($f = 114$, 94%), while seven of the total respondents indicated that it was not their chosen track. Since students were given the freedom to choose their track, most of them also intend to stay in their track ($f = 109$, 90%). The data also showed that SHS students had no plans of transferring to another school. Among the respondents ($f = 111$, 92%) intend to stay in the present school and the majority of the students will pursue a college degree after they graduated in SHS. Students who choose their track tend to stay on the track and school as well as pursue tertiary education once they finish SHS level.

Table 6.

Students in their Present Strand (n = 12)

Variables	<i>f</i>	Total %
Previous School		
Same	75	62
Different	29	24
Did Not Indicate	17	14
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100</i>
Students Choosing the Track		
Yes	114	94
No	7	6
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100</i>
Intent to Stay in the Track		
Yes	109	90
No	12	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100</i>
Intent to Stay in the Present School		
Yes	111	92
No	9	7
Did Not Intake	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100</i>
Plan after Graduation		
Work	20	17
Business	3	2
Go to College	98	81
<i>Total</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100</i>

Personality traits of Grade 11 students towards their success in the Senior High School

Table 7 shows the mean scores of items under the adaptability factor. It ranges from 2.77 to 3.36, with item 1 having the highest mean. Moreover, the high means on positively stated items and low means on negatively stated items suggest that the students are adaptable to SHS program.

Table 7.

Mean, Standard Deviation and Range of Likert Scores on Adaptability (n=121)

Variable	Statement	Mean	SD
A1	I have made many friends in senior HS.	3.36	0.56
A5*	I have difficulty adjusting in senior HS.	2.27	0.74
A9	I am ready for the challenges of senior HS.	3.21	0.59
A13*	I am uneasy whenever I face difficulties in senior HS.	2.77	0.72
A17	My resourcefulness has helped me handle new situations in senior HS.	3.29	0.58

*negative statements

Table 8 shows the mean scores of items under the Goal-orientation ranging from 1.66 to 3.08. Furthermore, the high means on positively stated items and low means on negatively stated items suggest that the respondents are goal-oriented students. The positive item that obtained the highest mean was Item 14 "I will learn the skills I need for my chosen career" ($M = 3.28, \pm 0.61$), while the negative item that had the lowest mean was Item 18 on "I am not sure I will be able to get my HS diploma soon" ($M = 1.66, \pm 0.67$). It can be inferred from the results that Grade 11 SHS students intend to be successful at the SHS level.

Table 8.

Mean, Standard Deviation and Range of Likert Scores on Goal-orientation (n=121)

Variable	Statement	Mean	SD
GO2	I can do well in my subjects in SHS	3.08	0.44
GO6*	I will not be able to finish senior high school on time.	1.73	0.72
GO10*	Senior HS will not really prepare me for the future	1.91	0.72
GO14	will learn the skills I need for my chosen career	3.28	0.61
GO18*	I am not sure I will be able to get my HS diploma soon	1.66	0.67

*negative statements

As shown in Table 9, the highest mean score among the positive items in Motivation construct is on Grade 11 students felt satisfied when they do well in school ($M = 3.74, \pm 0.50$), while the lowest mean scores among the negative items was students did not feel like finishing SHS ($M = 1.50, \pm 0.68$). The high means on positively stated items and low means on negatively stated items suggest that the respondents are goal-oriented students, that they are motivated to pursue SHS.

Table 9.

Mean, Standard Deviation and Range of Likert Scores on Motivation (n=121)

Variable	Statement	Mean	SD
M3	I feel satisfied when I do well in school.	3.74	0.50
M7	Getting a good grade inspires me to study.	3.53	0.66
M11*	I really do not feel like finishing my senior HS.	1.50	0.68
M15*	Learning new things in class does not really excite me.	1.86	0.75
M19*	It is hard to imagine I will be successful as a senior HS student	2.05	0.85

*negative statements

In Table 10, the positive items with the highest average is the belief of the students that they can adjust to any change during their SHS ($M = 3.34, \pm 0.61$). On the other hand, the negative items that had the lowest mean was Item 8 ($M = 1.83, \pm 0.65$). The results suggest that the respondents have confidence in themselves that they can handle SHS. However, responses in Item 4 ($M = 2.33, \pm 0.77$) and Item 20 ($M = 2.71, \pm 0.92$) have high variability.

Table 10.

Mean, Standard Deviation and Range of Likert Scores on Self-Efficacy (n=121)

Variable	Statement	Mean	SD
SE4*	I am not sure if I can pass all my tests.	2.33	0.77
SE8*	I lack the ability to meet the requirements of senior HS.	1.83	0.65
SE12	I believe I can adjust to any change during my senior HS.	3.34	0.61
SE16	I feel confident that I will be able to overcome difficulties in school.	3.14	0.61
SE20	If I face any problem with my schooling, I will surely find a solution to it.	2.71	0.92

*negative statements

The overall results of psychological traits are shown on Table 11. The high means of each of the factor of the scale suggest that the students, in general, have personality traits that are needed towards success in SHS. Among the five factors the respondents scored highest is motivation ($M=3.37, \pm 0.69$). This means that they are motivated to finish SHS. This is followed by adaptability dimension ($M = 3.36, \pm 0.63$), which means that they can easily make friends, be able to adjust to the difficulties and challenges encountered and be resourceful when needed. The factor that they scored the lowest is under the self-efficacy dimension ($M = 3.00, \pm 0.71$). This would mean that students may still have doubts on their capabilities that they can meet the requirements and pass their requirements in the SHS.

Table 11.

Overall Mean and Standard Deviation for Psychological Preparedness Scale (n = 121)

Dimensions	Mean	SD
Adaptability	3.36	0.63
Goal-Orientation	3.22	0.63
Motivation	3.3	0.69
Self-Efficacy	3.0	0.71
Overall	3.26	0.67

Psychological Preparedness of students towards their success in the SHS as disaggregated by tracks, gender, and type of school (RQ3)

Table 12 shows the overall attitude and the five factors of the scale as aggregated by track, gender, and type of school. Results show that when students are disaggregated by track group, the TVL track ($M = 2.96, \pm 0.67$) has the lower self-efficacy than those under the academic track ($M = 3.02, \pm 0.70$). When disaggregated by sex, male SHS students ($M = 2.95, \pm 0.70$) have lower belief in their self than with their female counterpart ($M = 3.03, \pm 0.71$). Lastly, students coming from public schools ($M = 2.97, \pm 0.68$) have lower self-efficacy than their private counterpart ($M = 3.06, \pm 0.69$).

Table 12.

	A		GO		M		SE		Overall	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Track										
Academic (n=101)	2.95	0.64	3.22	0.62	3.35	0.69	3.02	0.70	3.14	0.66
TVL (n=37)	2.99	0.63	3.22	0.61	3.42	0.65	2.96	0.67	3.15	0.64
Gender										
Male (n=43)	2.91	0.64	3.20	0.63	3.45	0.62	2.95	0.70	3.13	0.64
Female (n=96)	3.00	0.64	3.24	0.62	3.32	0.70	3.03	0.71	3.14	0.66
Type of School										
Public (n=1)	2.97	0.58	3.19	0.62	3.36	0.72	2.97	0.68	3.12	0.65
Private (n=2)	2.95	0.79	3.23	0.62	3.38	0.65	3.06	0.69	3.16	0.69

Conclusions and Recommendations

Personality traits of SHS students. Grade 11 students possess a moderate level of psychological traits in the SHS program. The order of highest personality traits as indicated in their responses in the scale were motivation, adaptability, goal-orientation and self-efficacy. Concerning their personality traits in track group, gender, and type of school when respondents were disaggregated, Grade 11 students are high in motivation, adaptability, and goal orientation. Students under the TVL track, male students and those enrolled in the public schools were found to have the lowest self-efficacy relative to their counterpart.

Positive psychological traits. Despite the complaints coming from different stakeholders, Grade 11 students were adaptable, motivated, and goal-oriented learners. However, students' lack belief in their capability towards success in SHS. Self-Efficacy is varied in the group. The group of students that have lower self-efficacy are the TVL track, male students, and enrolled in SHS

Recommendations

Counselling SHS students, using varied learning strategies, and support from parents. In this study, self-efficacy is low in Grade 11 students. Three recommendations are given for these findings. First, guidance counselors must develop a program where students' self-efficacy can be promoted because this psychological trait is critical to the students' self-perception of success. Second, teachers must use various types of learning strategies to enhance students' self-confidence in facing academic challenges thus, building self-efficacy. Lastly, Encourage parents' responsiveness to the emotional needs of their teens. Positive parenting style and discipline may help students increase the likelihood of becoming self-efficacious. Explore differences in track, gender, and type of schools. Further studies should see whether significant differences between groupings under track, gender, and type of school exist.

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Lived Experiences of Guidance Facilitators Who Take the Role of Guidance Counselors in the Philippines

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Abstract

Guidance facilitators in the Philippines usually do not hold the qualifications of a guidance counselor. Yet, due to registered guidance counselor (RGC) shortage, guidance facilitators who graduated in various fields must take RGC's role, thus, the gap remains and literature on this issue is scarce. Hence, this phenomenological research explored the experiences of guidance facilitators with their clients. It answered two research questions: (a) How do the guidance facilitators describe their experiences in taking RGC's role? (b) What issues and challenges have the guidance facilitators faced? Fifteen guidance facilitators who met the criteria set were the study's participants. To achieve maximum variation, participants were chosen across age, employment type, and location. Data were collected via one-on-one interviews and analyzed using Creswell's model retaining only relevant themes. The themes that emerged on the guidance facilitators' experiences were clients with special needs and boundary issues. Under boundary issues were multiple relationships, multiple roles, and love interest by clients with the guidance facilitators. The feelings of fear, difficulty, confusion, guilt, and sense of achievement were felt by the guidance facilitators as they described their counseling experiences. Issues and challenges faced by guidance facilitators were lack of training, job mismatch, lack of documentation, false accusation, limited technology and skills, and guidance counselors' insufficiency. Based on the findings, a training program for guidance facilitators is necessary. For future research, mixed method studies may be conducted to find out the extent of the problem in terms of the shortage of RGCs and to design intervention to address the RGC shortage.

Keywords: *guidance counselor shortage, counseling in the Philippines, boundary issues*

Acquiring a license is an ongoing challenge because of all the professions, guidance and counseling licensure requires a master's degree before one can take the licensure examination. Thus, it discourages many students and guidance facilitators who have been in the service for 10-30 years to become professional guidance counselors.

Most of the studies discussed the experiences of clients with the guidance facilitators. For example, De Stefano, Mann-Feder, and Gazzola, (2010), Falender and Shafrankse (2007), Oliveira, Sousa, and Pazo Pires (2012) and Sackett and Lawson (2016) were convinced that the interpersonal qualities, skills, and competence, counselor with the ability to establish substantial and authentic counseling experience were major contributors to their significant counseling experience.

A number of guidance facilitators have to deal with multiple and complex professional and personal dilemma in performing their responsibilities. Guidance facilitators do not have the credentials to perform as a school counselor, yet they are involved in counseling students. However, there have been scarcity of literature on the experiences of guidance facilitators, who are not registered guidance counselor (RGC) yet

they serve as such due to the shortage of RGCs in the Philippines according to Garcia (2012). The guidance (and counseling) movement in the Philippines is still in its adolescence stage (Tuason, 2008). Moreover, research on counseling practices remains comparatively unexamined (Clemeña, 1991). It has appeared that over the years, local literature on guidance and counseling, in general, is scarce particularly ones dealing on the experiences of appointed guidance facilitators due to lack of RGCs. Clemeña (1991) further highlighted that counseling in the country tends to be personal, and therefore violates the counselor's primary obligation to promote the client's well-being.

Guidance facilitators' lived experience is something that the researcher observed little attention because there is not enough literature both locally and globally that explored it. It was the researcher's desire to contribute positively on the lives of guidance facilitators and clients as well as the entire school. The researcher's perceptions on these issues were shaped by personal experiences as a guidance counselor since 1999. Thus, the researcher was prompted to explore deeply on the guidance facilitators' experiences as basis for developing a training program. To address this gap, the purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of guidance facilitators as they engaged in the guidance and counseling position even without the "credentials". One basic credential stated by R.A. 9258 is that every school counselor should have an RGC not a guidance facilitator. Thus, this study is imperative to fill the literature gap on the experiences of the guidance facilitators so that there will be a basis to improve the guidance and counseling situation in the country.

This study specifically answered the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of the guidance facilitators with their clients?
2. What issues and challenges the guidance facilitators have faced?

Methodology

This qualitative research utilized the Husserlian transcendental (descriptive) phenomenological method which involves the "direct exploration, analysis, and description of particular phenomena, as free as possible from unexamined presuppositions, aiming at maximum intuitive presentation" (Spielberg, 1975, p.3.) This study tried to investigate the live counseling experiences of guidance facilitators with their clients. Moreover maximum variation sampling technique and snowball sampling were employed to choose the participants. There were fifteen guidance facilitators who met the criteria set in this study.

One-on-one interview was the major data gathering tool used in this study. Specifically, semi-structured interview was used. An interview protocol was prepared to guide the interview process. The audio recorded data were transcribed diligently and manually by the researcher. They were organized with ample margins in both sides and number lines sequentially from start to finish as suggested by Padgett (2012). This is done by doing the coding process. After coding all the data, common themes were identified. The identified themes were linked to the research problems of the study. To further analyze the data, cross-case analysis was used. This is done by comparing and contrasting the results to find and explain commonalities and differences between the participants' experiences to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Data Gathering Procedure

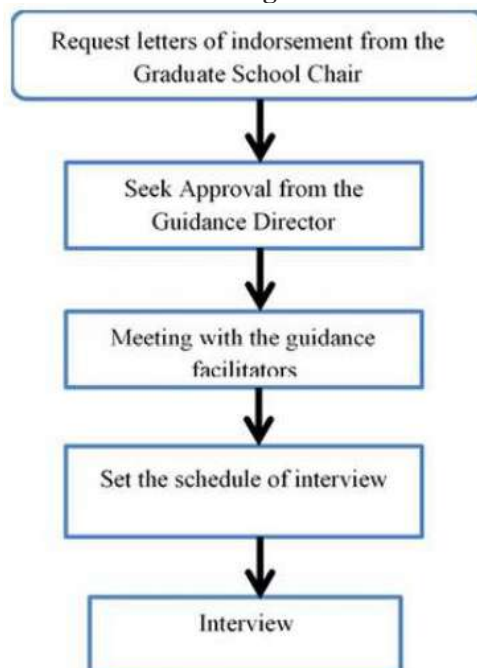


Figure 1. Data Gathering Flow Chart

Results and Discussion

Seven themes emerged to answer the first research question. The guidance facilitators in this study have experienced counseling clients with special needs and boundary issues. Under boundary issue, three themes have emerged: multiple roles, multiple relationships and love interest of clients. The participants have also experienced fear, difficulty, doubt/confusion, guilt and sense of achievement. Table 1 presents the summary of themes on the guidance facilitators' experiences with their clients.

Table 1.

Guidance Facilitators' Counseling Experiences with Their Clients

Research Question 1	Themes
What are the counseling experiences of the guidance facilitators' with their clients?	Students With Special Needs Boundary Issues Multiple Roles Multiple Relationship Love Interest by Clients Fear Difficulty Doubt/Confused Guilt Sense of Achievement

Students with special needs. The first theme that emerged based on the experiences of the participants was related to students with special needs. Erlinda says:

That student with psychological problem. One time I called him for counseling. He does not know his direction. He was lost. He does not know his room. I have to fetch and bring him back to his classroom. Yes, of course I am responsible to him if for example something bad happened to

him. That's my responsibility. Then I was observing him one time if he really knew his direction. Sometimes he was lost. What I did, I walked behind him, and then he entered in a wrong room, of course students laughed at him, though it was in the same story. He cannot really recall where his room is. (Erlinda, 34, Private School, AB Psychology graduate)

In the same way, Hannah, 30 years old, shared a similar incident. According to her, first time experience was unforgettable. Hannah knows that handling this kind of clients was beyond her competency so she sought help from her colleague who has experience in processing children with special needs. She made the right decision based on the ethical guidelines. She also took the opportunity to learn how to pacify children with special needs through observation.

On the other hand, a student diagnosed with bipolar disorder was one of the unique experiences of Annie as far as counseling experience is concerned. Annie, also a Psychology graduate, aged 36 has been in the guidance office in a private school for 10 years.

Erlinda, Hannah, and Annie were in their early 30's, all Psychology graduates and have 8-10 years of experience. Although they were from different school type, these guidance facilitators have experienced counseling students with special needs. Dealing with students with special needs is a challenging and unique counseling experience because they were not competent to handle them. They were not trained to help students with special needs even though they have eight years of guidance and counseling work. Some of these participants prayed to God to seek help and guidance because it was difficult to deal with them.

The term special need is a short form for Special Education Needs (Tu & Cunningham, 2005) that refers to students with disabilities. Tarrasch (2014) suggested in a study that in counseling special students, mindfulness practices can be successfully introduced into traditional academic settings and integrated as part of preservice course curricula to enhance professional's personal mental health and their ability to transmit the benefits of meditation to their pupils. Guidance facilitators for instance, found it too difficult to handle children with special needs as they were not fully trained. Yet, formal preparation for school counselors seems to be lacking, specifically at the graduate level (Nichter & Edmonson, 2005). Guidance facilitators' boundary issue. Boundary issue was admitted by the guidance facilitators since they engaged to multiple roles and multiple relationships.

Multiple relationships. Multiple relationships are the most common pitfalls of boundary crossing. It can be that a counselor turns into a friend and or a counselor turns into business clients. For instance, Joyce, working as a guidance facilitator in a private university in Cavite speaks about her counseling experiences with her clients. Joyce said:

Anyway, the effect was that more often they will come here not for usual counseling but business. They will come and visit me here as my former client, current client, regular client then they offer me books so I buy, I will order. That's it, the effect, is it seems sometimes, they only visit me not for counseling not really for it but sometimes for business. Then I followed up. Then they come back again if they actually have problem and we did counseling. Then they will return to collect payments. (Joyce, 37, Private School, Biology graduate, Lines 127-131)

Sandy who has been working as guidance facilitator in a small private elementary school in Cavite elaborates: *I become friends with the parents. There was once, you can't really avoid it, like the student has been studying here since preschool until now, He's grade 6, the closeness is already there, right? The parents are already close to teachers, so you really get close.*" (Sandy, 34, Private School, Psychology graduate)

Sandy and Erlinda revealed that they cannot ignore the relationship between guidance facilitators and parents as they get in contact most of the time. Parents tend to be close to the guidance facilitators and they become friends over time. This is also the sentiment of Marjorie, a 443 year old guidance facilitator.

Boundary issues are something that is not yet clear and understood by some of the guidance facilitators. Marjorie, Sandy, Erlinda and Joyce, with different educational attainments for example, have admitted that they build relationships with their current clients. They are still confused of their actions. They could not resist being friends with their clients. As indicated in the therapeutic boundary principles, this relationship could cause conflict of interest between guidance facilitators and clients. Hence, may do harm rather than helping the client obtain better understanding of self. Boundaries are derived from ethical treatise, cultural morality, and jurisprudence. Sometimes, it is difficult to clearly define the perimeter of these boundaries and the integrity of the relationship (Guthiel & Simon, 2002).

In relation, Hanna and Suplee (2013) studied boundaries for nursing-patient relationship and highlighted that feelings such as trust, compassion, mutual respect and empathy within a nurse-patient relationship should not be replaced by inappropriate touch and sexual misconduct, and so with the counselor-counselee relationship.

Love interest with the guidance facilitators. Guidance facilitators usually encounter clients who got attracted to them and be threatened by their actions.

According to Delsa, a 28 year old Psychology graduate working in a public school, guidance facilitators who usually deal with gentleman are prone to such attraction. Delsa's clients would verbally express their feelings to her but she sticks with the boundary and never entertains them even if the clients were willing to wait for many years. At times, her clients would insist through chat or text but she remained professional dealings only with the issue not on the intimacy aspect.

However, 43 year old Marjorie has a different experience. Her client would kiss or hug him in public and at times kiss her while asleep in the onset of the counselor-client relationship. These demonstrated crossing boundaries. Intimate relationship as indicated in the law is prohibited during the process of counseling session. Although she mentioned she did not take it seriously but she allows her client to kiss or hug her in public or private and this would mislead the therapeutic process. In connection, Joana who has been in the guidance office as guidance facilitator also admitted that clients got attracted to her and sometimes she was also attracted to her client. But Joana did not let herself be involved into a romantic relationship because she knows her limitations.

Clients may see the guidance counselor as a potential love interest. And others got attracted and develop feelings with the guidance facilitators. Professional counselors, social workers, and psychologists have the same perception regarding intimate behavior. Although none of them engaged in sexual relationships during the supervisory relationship, there were high risk behaviors suggested by past researchers which may lead to sexual relationships. These can be alarming to the profession as stated by McMurtery, Webb, and Arnold (2011). Sexual intimacies with clients are inappropriate behaviors under all circumstances (Barnett, 2014).

Multiple roles. Multiple roles refer to performing one or two more functions or positions simultaneously. Participants expressed that they performed multiple roles. For example, Norie a public high school guidance facilitator for 6 years and aged 34, said:

Because in public school, we were also assigned as a discipline officer, So instead of providing counsels, we also provide intervention, I am also giving discipline to clients, that the policy is like this and that. I sometimes acted as school registrar. I am also part of the grievance committee. If there is conflict between the workplace of the teachers, I also take charge. (Norie, 34, Public School, Psychology graduate)

Norie's admission of performing multiple roles occurs in government schools. It only shows that school and universities violated the code of ethics especially counselor's competence. Norie felt discouraged doing multiple responsibilities and often neglect major responsibilities as a guidance facilitator. Similarly, Sandy who worked in an elementary school for 14 years shared her experience being a guidance facilitator, cashier, and teacher at the same time. Tina also has the same experience with some of the participants. She was a class adviser and guidance facilitator. Tina was a guidance facilitator in one of the public high schools, aged 43 and finished her BSE major in English bachelor's degree.

Tina, Sandy, and Norie are all married but with different educational backgrounds and school types. They have experienced multiple roles while working as guidance facilitators. Since they were not RGCs, their supervisors tend to add more roles and functions upon them. School counselors for example are given other assignment that deviate from their counseling role and promotion is slower. They are either assigned administrative duties or other task unrelated to counseling (Villar, 2001).

Fear. The description of the guidance facilitators' about their counseling experiences was fear. For example, Judie, 56 years old, and had only 5 years of experience as guidance facilitator expressed:

There was a time that I was afraid to give counsel because I am not sure if my advice would be for good or bad. I based my counseling techniques for example, I think myself as the parent, that I was counseling my own child. That I would like to help him change for the better. That's what I do. And then when I felt that student does not like to be reprimanded or shouted at, I talked in a low voice. So that's what I observed when talked to them. (Judie, 56, Public School, BSE Filipino graduate)

Marjorie was a college guidance facilitator in a private school in Laguna. She was observed as a cheerful and accommodating person by her colleagues. She is close to her clients and was still single during the interview; she narrated her experiences:

I was scared at first because as a guidance counselor (facilitator), we will always be responsible. I was also afraid that I may not be able to provide the right approach that I would be the reason he would destroy his life, because the student was intelligent. He has a lot of aspirations and good dreams. I don't like it that I would be the reason he had broken life because I was avoiding him. I saw him as easily gets frustrated. Because he was longing for his mother's love and affection so then, I slowly turn away from him. I was afraid that I would be the cause of destroying his life. I told him that I felt afraid of my feelings towards him. He too saw it and its becoming obvious. (Marjorie, 43, Private School, MA Guidance)

Ninda however felt differently from the rest of the participants. Ninda feared not to get involved in any boundary issues. She was too cautious not to get involved in any boundary violations. She knows what was at stake when a professional guidance counselor enters into the boundary issues such as being involved in a romantic relationship with clients and having a business or personal affair with clients. On the other hand, Delsa was also scared when she was confronted with an issue that she was not competent enough to handle.

Fear is an instinctual response that's adaptive and critical for survival when it is short-lived but can lead to anxiety disorders when chronic (Quirk, 2017). Studying how the brain controls our fears helps us understand the mechanisms required recovering from traumatic experiences and what goes wrong when we don't.

Difficulty. Next to fear was the feeling of difficulty. The participants described their counseling experiences with their clients as difficult. Erlinda narrates:

Yes, because it is critical, of course, that was the most difficult because he was psychologically ill. That's when I gave test or undergo counseling. But you never know what was in the mind. Because the child has a problem psychologically. So that was too difficult. But a child with psychological problem was the most difficult. (Erlinda, 34, Private School, Psychology graduate)

Annie also felt that counseling with her clients is difficult and she believes that her clients should not depend on the facilitator. Thus, clients should be empowered to decide for themselves. Norie described her counseling experiences as difficult, too. She thought of changing her profession due to the issues she could hardly handle.

It was noted that guidance facilitators have difficulty in dealing with variety of clients and problems. Erlinda considered this counseling experience as the most critical and too difficult to process and handle because she does not know what was going in the mind of the student with special needs. She admitted she had to pray when dealing with clients with special needs.

There were areas where most mental health professionals experience difficulties. One is the career decision-making difficulties (Gati & Levin, 2014). For example, aspiration for an ideal occupation was positively associated only with lack of readiness. Procrastination was the only strategy related to all three decision difficulties: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. The results indicated the importance of decreasing procrastination at all stages of decision making and the need to promote resilience to deal with decision difficulties.

Doubt/Confusion. Feeling of doubt or confusion was another theme that emerged on how the participants described their counseling experience with their clients. For example, Tina and Luz revealed that they were sometimes confused counseling students or clients. She says:

I doubted myself. Especially when a case suddenly appeared. Of course, I have to think on how to address the need of the child. (Tina, 43, Public School, BSE English graduate)

I was in doubt to handle rape victims. (Delsa, 28, Public School, Psychology graduate)

Yes...there is doubt especially if I am not trained in that certain problem. Sometimes, I have a second thought...is this right. (Luz, 45, Public School, Psychology graduate)

Guidance facilitators felt confused when asked how they described their counseling experiences with their clients. A phenomenological approach revealed several challenges experienced by the counselors in working across race and culture. One reason is the counselors' lack of cultural knowledge. These experiences engendered the counselors' self-doubt regarding their abilities to work effectively across culture (Malott, Havlik, Palacios, Lewis, & White, 2014).

Sense of achievement. Another theme that emerged from the guidance facilitator's experience is sense of achievement. It is a positive description of counseling experiences. Just like what Sandy said:

For me, it's like feeling of big achievement to smoothly handle difficult counseling experience. I overcome those. But there was a time that no issue. I was able to settle the problem that for other it was tough while for some was not. But I handle it. (Sandy, 34, Private School, Psychology graduate)

Although she performed multiple roles in a small private elementary and high school, she considers her profession as rewarding, being able to overcome difficult clients and help them to get through it. She felt accomplished. Annie also felt the same with Sandy. Annie finished Bachelor of Science in Psychology has more or less 10 years in the counseling field. She is aware that counseling is not easy and it is a process; yet when she empowered her clients to solve their problems on their own, she felt a sense of achievement. Furthermore, Erlinda was happy to be in her current profession as a counselor. She considers it a significant part to give counsel to students.

Hossain and Sultana (2014) studied factors affecting achievement motivations of individuals across the industries. They also mentioned that general well-being may be defined as the subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life experiences and one's role in the world of work, sense of achievement, utility, belongingness, and no distress, dissatisfaction or worries etc.. Happiness is a nebulous term, which to date has different meanings to different people. Results indicated that significantly more happiness is perceived by elderly males as compared to their female counterparts but females were facing greater health problems in comparison to the males (Princy & Kang, T. K., 2014).

Guilt. Another theme that came out when asked about the description of the participants' counseling experiences with their client was guilt. Norie, was a principled person who knows her limitations but somehow enjoyed the presence and relationship with clients. She chose to be with clients rather than do what the profession asks.

Studies showed that counselors who violated or crossed boundary have experienced feelings of embarrassment, depression, loss, distress, awkwardness, shame, and guilt (Rodgers, 2011). Guilt is the fact of having committed a breach of conducts especially violating law which involves penalty. Guilt is an inherently adaptive characteristic social emotion while shame is an inherently maladaptive emotion. Thus, those interested in moral character development and psychopathology should work to increase an individual's guilt-proneness and decrease an individual's shame-proneness. (Dempsey, 2017).

Lack of training, lack of documentation in counseling practice, false accusation, use of technology, and insufficiency of guidance facilitators were the emerging themes that answered research question number 2.

Table 2.

Issues and Challenges Faced by Guidance Facilitators

Research Question 2	Themes
What are the issues and challenges guidance facilitator's have faced?	Lack of training Lack of documentation False Accusation Mismatch to the Position as Guidance Facilitator Use of Technology Guidance Counselor's Insufficiency

Lack of training. One of the challenges expressed by the participants was that they lack training or experience. This can be rooted from their educational preparation. For instance, Delsa was hesitant to process the client because she did not know what to do. But the client voluntarily went to her office and confided her problem. As a young facilitator she felt that she lacked training in handling or processing rape case. Another experience was narrated by Joyce, who has been in the counseling profession for more than 10 years. Joyce still recognized that she lacks training in handling suicidal persons.

Erlinda described herself as incompetent guidance facilitator during her early days. But now due to her length of experience she's beginning to feel better. *During my first year, I knew I am not competent enough to be a guidance facilitator*, she mentioned.

It is worth noting that indeed during the first year of employment as guidance facilitator's participants told that they often lacked experience or training in a particular case. This supposedly should have been addressed by their academic preparations. It seemed that they were employed without training or experience. This also implies that students finished the guidance and psychology course without proper training in handling variety of issues and with different clients. Further, Hannah, 30 years of age and with eight years of experienced has the same story:

I am still new here. I am not trained to handle students with special needs.

(Hannah, 30, Public School, Psychology graduate)

Lack of adequate training can cause ineffective management, low production, unhappy employees and high turnover, and increased expenses and loss of customers. One cannot provide counseling with client if one has no experience of giving counseling. There were many researches which confirmed that counselors have lack of experience in handling variety of cases. In Malaysia, counselors showed lack of collaboration among various educational stakeholders and the resources in the community were not utilized productively (Low, Kok & Lee, 2013). This is reiterated on the study conducted by Oberman (2005) which manifested that many counselors receive supervision from inadequate sources, such as principals and guidance directors, who often lack training and experience in the field of counseling.

Lack of documentation in the counseling practice. Another challenge that confronted facilitators was the lack of documentation in the counseling practice. The Code of Ethics clearly indicated that proper documentation should be faithfully done to monitor client's progress and development. An example was the experience of Joyce. Documentation is an integral part of counseling to protect both the counselor and the client. Joyce acknowledged that counseling documentation is not fully practiced until now. She was also aware that if she failed to document the counseling session, she will be in trouble in the future if in case the client will sue her as the guidance facilitator. As revealed in the experience of Luz, during the counseling session, she did not intentionally record them because of confidentiality issues. And it seemed that Luz did not want to deal with such case and wanted to refer the client immediately to the DSWD office. However, during the interrogation process, she lacks written documents to prove her claim.

But I did not really record in my logbook or whatever because I know that it was confidential and at the same time I don't like to get involved in such a case...But It taught me a lesson, I need to record everything when I counseled.(Luz, 45, Public School, Psychology graduate)

In reality, counselors are often confused and have wrong interpretation of the code of ethics (Hoover, 2010). Documentation is very important as emphasized by Robertson (2016), especially when counselor addresses issues such as court appearances, working within scope of practice, and understanding and communicating effectively with lawyers.

Systematic documentation techniques focusing on children's learning have been increasingly established in institutions (Schulz, 2015). The problem of a lack of empirically based knowledge regarding these techniques is implemented in practice.

However, among nurses and other helping professionals, Asamani, Amenorpe, Babanawo, and Ansah Ofei (2014), said that documentation still has its setbacks and receives varying levels of priority among nurses and other health professionals. Documentation is not on a par with that in developed countries, partly owing to a lack of guidelines, as well as a persistent shortage of nurses and the limited use of nursing care records.

False accusations. One of the challenges that have been encountered too by the guidance facilitators was false accusation. Norie revealed that though she reported the case to the authorities and she knows the protocol, yet the story turned out the opposite way because the administration was not ready to process the case. Plus she failed to put them into writing. Norie said:

I informed immediately my boss my principal about the sexual harassment and told her that the case was so big and sensitive. That these what happened. So, I think even the student could not made a written complaint it needed immediate action. The things that was so unforgettable for me was when it turned out I was blamed by other teacher because according to them I should not investigate secretly, no pat on the back to suspected teacher of sexual harassment. Because they thought I should protect the suspect, too. As I said, I think I did the protocol to inform the higher authorities. But then the authority (principal) denied that he did not know about the sexual harassment... that was then during the general meeting. He denied and so many teachers question me as I was new in the place.(Norie, 34, Public School, Psychology graduate)

The same is true with Luz, she experienced being accused by the family of her client of intervening with their problems. The family reported her in the main office because the family of her client filed a case against her. She considered this counseling experience as the most discouraging because her good intention was reversed into something she did not expect.

There was a child that I counselled and after the counselling when the family has known, it seemed that everything was reversed. The father said this was supposed to be a family matter and you

(Guidance Facilitator) should not intervene. Later on, they fought with me at the division office.
(Luz, 45, Public School, Psychology graduate)

False accusations (groundless accusations, unfounded accusations, false allegations, or false claims) happens when there is insufficient supporting evidence to determine whether an accusation is true or false, it is described as “unsubstantiated” or “unfounded”. Accusations that are determined to be false based on corroborating evidence can be divided into three categories (Ney,1995); (a) an allegation that is completely false in that the events that were alleged did not occur; (b) an allegation that describes events that did occur, but were perpetrated by an individual who is not accused, and in which the accused person is innocent; (c) an allegation that is partially true and partially false, in that it mixes descriptions of events that actually happened with other events that did not occur.

Mismatch to the position as a guidance facilitator. Another challenge experienced by the participants was the mismatch to the position as a guidance facilitator. Judie shared, she was a class adviser and guidance facilitator at the same time. She finished BSE Major in Filipino. Yet she functions as the guidance facilitator. Judie admitted that she was never fit as far as qualifications are concerned.

This is the same experience of Tina who was assigned by the principal as guidance facilitator though she was not a guidance and psychology major. Tina also revealed that in the public school at times, the supervisor will select position based on one’s personality not on the qualification.

Because in my case, I lack knowledge ... I have not studied [Guidance and Counselling] and I really wanted to [study]. I should have enrolled in the guidance and counselling so I can push this career. People would say, are you the guidance counselor? She replied, excuse me correction please, I am just a coordinator. But Ma’am my boss said, you are designated but not a counselor yet. (Tina, 43, Public School, BSE English graduate)

Tina and Judy, age 43 and 56 from public schools, have educational background that is not related to guidance and psychology, were assigned by their principal as guidance facilitators. This scenario placed them in an alarming situation because they are not licensed to assume the position of a guidance counselor..

According to Garcia (2012), the Philippines have a shortage of license guidance counselors that is why even unqualified personnel were being assigned in the guidance office. The Department of Labor and Employment of the Philippines commits to what seems to be a never-ending cause of providing enough decent jobs for Filipinos. It may be pleasing to hear that more than a hundred thousand jobs are available to date, yet numbers are still growing in terms of both unemployment and underemployment. Job mismatch cases in the Philippines is so common among today’s workforce, hence more and more employees become restless and frustrated with their current jobs and career paths.

Use of technology. Another topic transpired from the challenges of the guidance counselor was technology usage. Some would be willing to use their personal accounts and serve clients beyond office hours while others would use office numbers and accounts and works during office hours only. For example, Hannah related:

It is always beyond office hours (when conducting counseling with students) because student now a days are very techie, so there are times or they prefer to have the counselling sessions through chat, when we talked so long and got tired to explain, I said to my student “No, we really need to talk in person tomorrow, go to me during your vacant time. So we really extend our services because there were times that they are comfortable to express themselves in using technology social network. Ahh, yes, a lot of times for all clients because our orientation here was that “you always put clients first before yourself” even during lunch time, when they came, we prioritize them rather than our lunch. The same at night when client consulted us through text especially facebook, others tweeter when they open, because sometimes they need to make decisions that you have to tell them, oh you need to tell them to your parents, or you need to say these to them,

and then when at night that they cannot make decisions or cannot do it. You have to encourage, it's happening, we really extend our counselling session until night. (Hannah, 30, Public School, Psychology graduate)

On the contrary, Annie believes that personal number should not be disclosed to clients because it occupies her time since clients can reach her anytime. However, in the case of Joyce who was still in doubt whether to exchange text messages beyond office hours or deal the clients on her schedule work time, narrated:

Was it right that I have exchanged text messages with him? Was it right to continue sending messages or better yet that I acted professional that I rather talk to him at the office.(Joyce, 37, Private School, Biology graduate)

Muge, Sibel, Yeliz (2015) revealed that guidance counselors had negative opinion about using online counseling. Vinluan (2010) also agrees that guidance counselor's confidentiality and security of online counseling should be taken into consideration. In Metro Manila, however, guidance counselors showed a higher level of awareness of communication technology and had a positive attitude to the use of ICT in guidance.

Guidance counselor insufficiency. Another challenge and issue is insufficient number of guidance counselors and most especially male counselors. Marjorie was a college guidance facilitator, still single and aged 43 at the time of the interview. She stated:

I would like to suggest if ever to employ male counselor, we are all female here, no male counselor so when there were male issues, I ask help from other male teachers which as much as possible I do not like to do it because they were not trained for counseling. (Marjorie, 43, Private School, MA Guidance graduate)

Luz faced challenges in handling so many students considering that she was the only guidance facilitator. She was working in a public high school from Luzon. She further revealed that she could only assist students as per referral by the teachers. Other guidance services and programs were neglected.

Here ma'am, because we have plenty of students, most of our students and clients were referral. And they do not come voluntarily because there were so many of them. We have 5,000 plus students and mostly I am occupied or I only accommodate referral students. (Luz, 45, Public School, Psychology graduate)

Recruitment and retention of men in counseling was challenging (Marcheta, 2013). In some parts of the world, especially in Latin America, college students perceived that counselors were not around and failed to advertise the guidance office and there is a lack of individual counseling (Campos & Rodriguez 2009). In the Philippines, there was also a shortage of guidance counselors (Villar, 2001). There was an unrealistic counselor client ratio of 1:800-1000 in schools serving the poorer sector of the community. At present, there is roughly around 2000 licensed guidance counselors in the Philippines. The ratio of counselors to students across levels is estimated at 1:12, 500 (Garcia, 2012). In relation to this, the American School Counselor Association required that the maximum student-counselor ratio of 250 to 1 in the colleges and universities must be followed to cater the needs of the students (Edelman, 2017).

The proposed program was a six-day period program with seven topics to be discussed. These topics were based from the themes that emerged on the experiences, issues, and challenges shared by the guidance facilitators. Since all the participants were not licensed guidance counselor, they were not qualified to function as guidance counselor without supervision according to the law. Hence, it is the desire of the study to equip them with knowledge to handle cases like sexual abuse, drug abuse, academic failure, suicide/suicidal attempt, boundary issues, and technology usage and counseling documentation to avoid false accusation. The findings of the study also indicated that newly hired guidance facilitators lack training in handling cases mentioned in the study.

Conclusions

Guidance facilitators encountered clients with varying issues and challenges brought in the counseling session. The findings showed that the experiences of the guidance facilitators were more negative rather than positive because they felt inadequate to handle the different problems and issues presented by their clients. Also, the guidance facilitators themselves have their own issues specifically on boundaries which exacerbated their negative experiences. The multiple roles placed by their supervisors added to their work dilemmas. These complex and challenging negative experiences were primarily due the guidance facilitators' incompetence to fulfill their job which could be due to their mismatch between their position and their professional preparation and qualifications. Moreover, even Psychology graduates who have 8-14 years of experience in the work reported incompetence in handling cases like sexual abuse, suicide, suicidal attempt, and drug abuse. These guidance facilitators are working both in public and private schools and universities. Both newly hired and old guidance facilitators have similar counseling experiences with their clients. They were confronted with the same issues and challenges such as unable to document their counseling sessions, false accusations, and boundary issues.

In relation to the boundary principles, the findings imply that it is important for the guidance facilitators to be aware and to apply ethical principles in the counseling practice. Although there is a mismatch between their job as guidance facilitators and their educational attainment, they have to learn to adjust to the demands of what their profession requires through intensive training and development. The client's welfare is the topmost priority of the guidance facilitator. Therefore, the findings suggest a training program for the guidance facilitators to be equipped with skills to handle those cases mentioned above. Thus, the proposed program developed in this study based on the results is a great contribution to the body of knowledge to improve the current guidance counseling situation in the Philippines.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends the following:

Guidance facilitators. The findings of the study implied that specific training programs for guidance facilitator be made to resolve the issues and challenges they face. Most of all, to be competent enough to the ever changing demands of the profession; guidance facilitators must have continuous development training and program. Guidance facilitators must have an organization that will cater and prepare them for the licensure exam. They must also comply to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Guidance and Counseling, to make an effort to comply with the competency required by the law by passing the licensure examination for guidance counselors.

Educational institutions and administrators. Support guidance facilitators should comply with the law but should be under the supervision of the schools. Administrators may allow them to finish their master's degree and participate in the training and development so that they can take the licensure examination and be a registered guidance counselor. There is a need in the educational institution to strictly comply with intensive on- the- job training of future guidance counselors.

Government/Professional Regulations Commission. PRC should constantly check and monitor, especially government schools and small educational institutions in the country, whether they follow the policies made. It appears that the implementation of the law has not been fully imposed. There is a need to require all guidance coordinators or facilitators placed as guidance counselor to undergo training and/or pass the licensure exam.

Future research. The issues and challenges faced by the guidance facilitators still remain since the implementation of Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004. Therefore, future researcher must dwell on such matters to conduct a quantitative study on how many guidance facilitators and educational institutions in the country are not complying with RA 92 58.

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Songs and Spiritual Life: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The influence of songs in English language learning is substantiated in many studies. Songs are considered to be influential not only to learners' language skills but also to their character. However, though the aforementioned relationships are widely studied, little is known about the relationship between song and its role in relation to learners' spiritual life. This phenomenological study with 28 participants revealed the kind of songs that can contribute to the spiritual life of the learners. It highlights pedagogical insights of an instructional strategy for integrating faith into learning.

Keywords: *Songs, spiritual life, phenomenological study, Indonesia*

Songs are believed to influence teaching-learning processes. Studies (Aguirre, Buztinza, & Garvich, 2016; Kuśnierek, 2016; Patel & Laud, 2007; Romero, Bernal & Olivares, 2012) support the role of songs in teaching-learning processes. Songs have been proven to positively contribute towards varied learners' language skills—listening (Kuswoyo, 2013; Orlova, 2003; Rafiee, Kassaian, & Dastjerdi, 2010); speaking (Ashtiani & Zafarghandi, 2015; Castro-Huertas, & Navarro-Parra, 2013; Orlova, 2003), and writing (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2016).

Songs are superior strategies to strengthen fluency in English (Patel & Laud, 2007), may it be grammar (Orlova, 2003); pronunciation (Chen, 2016; Romero et al., 2012); rhythm, stress, and intonation of the English language (Orlova, 2003); vocabulary acquisition (Romero et al., 2012) and memorization for they foster lexicon memorization (Chen, 2016; Kuśnierek, 2016). Songs motivate learners to learn English (Romero et al., 2012) by becoming participative towards classroom activities (Aguirre et al., 2016). Songs—fusion of music and lyrics—possess intrinsic benefits—“kaleidoscope of culture, expressiveness, recitability and therapeutic functions” (Shen, 2009)—essentials for language teaching. Given all these, songs result to learners' better academic achievements (Kuśnierek, 2016). No wonder, songs are employed as teaching tools.

Despite the vast research on how songs may enhance learner's language learning (Aguirre et al., 2016; Alisaari & Heikkola, 2016; Ashtiani & Zafarghandi, 2015; Castro-Huertas, & Navarro-Parra, 2013; Chen, 2016; Kuśnierek, 2016; Kuswoyo, 2013; Orlova, 2003; Patel & Laud, 2007; Rafiee et al., 2010; Romero et al., 2012; & Shen, 2009), and how they may affect to learners' emotional (Ahmad, 2015) & cognitive developments (Nicolich, 2008), little has been done on how songs help on the spiritual development of the English language learners (ELLs). This phenomenological study takes into account this gap—the roles songs have towards the spiritual development of the ELLs based on their lived experiences.

Review of the Literature

Literature affirms the significance of songs the aspect of the spiritual development of the ELLs (White, 2014). This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of sophomore tertiary students. The review of the literature considers songs in the Old and New Testaments and how songs influence ELLs' spiritual development.

Songs in the Old & New Testaments

Both the Old and New Testaments narrated of stories on the roles of songs. In the Old Testament, stories include when Miriam sang to the Lord after the Israelites had crossed over the Red Sea (Exodus

15:20-21)—a song of exaltation; the Israelites lifted their voices to the Lord when they were provided water in the desert (Exodus 15:22-27)—a song of providence; Deborah and Barak together with the Israel judges sang to honor their victory in battle (Judges 5:1-3)—a song of victory; Israelite women sang in triumph of David after defeating Goliath (1 Samuel 18:6)—another song of victory, and the Levites' singing during Temple dedication (2 Chronicles 29: 25-29)—a song of dedication. In the New Testament, stories include when Jesus sang with His disciples during the Last Supper (Mark 14:26); when Paul and Silas were imprisoned (Acts 16:25)—songs of praise and prayer.

The power of songs are varied. Songs are employed for spiritual development. Taylor (2001) stresses that songs are instructional strategies for integrating faith and learning (IFL).

Songs in the Classroom

Songs are powerful stimuli because they speak directly to learners' emotions (Harmer, 2001). By conveying emotions, hopes, and dreams, they are abundant with themes and expression which are reflected in the learners' heart (Shen, 2009). They shape one's peace, environmental protection, enjoyment of life, and unity with nature (Dincel, 2017). Furthermore, songs advance learners' achievement, stimulation, self-direction, benevolence, conformity, and security (Dincel, 2017)—influencing desirable values and character (Dincel, 2017; Esteve-Faubel, Martin, & Junda, 2018).

The songs suggested are the spiritual songs (White, 2014) –where Jesus is introduced and maintained. As Taylor (2001) strongly suggest,

“Teachers must consciously incorporate in course requirements activities that will help prepare students to communicate God's truth. This testimony can be shared through various media-mime, speeches, articles, radio spots, posters, songs, and works of art. It can focus on health, conservation, interpersonal relationships, personal experiences, or specific moral values. The goal is to help students to develop a worldview in which they see themselves as active witnesses for God” (Taylor, 2001, p. 422)

No wonder, Taylor (n.d.) emphasizes that “in order that students might relate everything in life and learning to their faith, all subjects in a Christian school must be taught from a Christian perspective” (p. 409).

Given the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every aspect of life (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31), we need educational programs that teach young people to think Christianly and to be consistently Christian in all aspects of life.

Research Questions of the Study

The following research questions helped guide this exploration:

1. What are the lived experiences of the sophomore tertiary students during and after listening to religious songs in the class?
2. How do these lived experiences shape their spiritual life?

Research Design

The significance of knowing an instructional strategy beyond scholarly learning which is to develop faith prompted the researcher for an in-depth exploration through phenomenological study. A qualitative methodological approach, phenomenological study seeks reality in individual's narratives of their lived experiences of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). In other words, its goal is not only to comprehend and describe in-depth participants' phenomenon but come up at the essence of the participants' lived experiences (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). Such design helped in the investigation on the lived experiences of the participants—on how songs affect their faith development.

Research Setting, Participants and Sampling

This study was conducted in one of the universities in West Indonesia. A whole class of 28 sophomore tertiary students were recruited through purposive sampling. Participants agreed to voluntarily participate in the study.

Data Collection

The study was conducted for one whole semester with a total of 17 meetings. The 3-minute theme song, one related to class subject, served as a devotional prior to the meeting wherein students were asked to drop whatever they had in their hands and listened to the song before classes started.

Like most phenomenological studies, data were gathered through conversational and semi-structured interviews—main means of exploring in depth the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007). Also, participants answered open-ended questions. Given this, participants were able to tell their stories with the richness of their own experiences (Yin, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account for this study. Participants signed the informed consent after explanation and clarifications. Participants involved in the research need to have complete information about the study and that the recruited participants were unforced and willing to participate in the study from its onset to the end (Miles, Huberman, & Saldanya, 2014).

Data Analysis

This is a qualitative research (QLR). It is employed because QLR deals on “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Also, QLR focuses on “studying the meaning of people’s lives, under real-world conditions” (Yin, 2011, p. 7). A phenomenological study specifically, this study “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57), a phenomenological study. During the interview and observations, both facial expressions and gestures were taken into account. Considering the need of immersion in a qualitative research, researchers entered into the participants’ world and sought participants’ perspective (Creswell, 2009). The answers to the open-ended questions were translated. Recurring categories were grouped into themes.

Findings and Discussion

From the observations, interviews, and answers to the open-ended questionnaires, the researcher came up with one overarching theme (faith) to summarize their experiences from the lived experiences of the 28 sophomore tertiary students.

Recurring Themes

From the experiences of the participants were identified five themes. These include (a) blessings, (b) peaceful mind, and a (c) closer relationship with God.

Blessings. Participants express their realization on the goodness of God. “God is kind and full of grace. It is such a wonderful feeling to come to know that He is “always beside me—standing close to me despite the troubles and struggles I am in”. God “always blesses me that is why “I am just so happy.” “It is so good to know that whatever I do, God is there”. Isn’t he wonderful? Participants discover that God’s goodness towards them enhances their experiences from day to day. The lyric of the song “reminded me to come to God first before doing any activities.” Given this, “I need not to murmur”, but simply “surrender to God” for “without Him I can do nothing”.

Peaceful Mind. Because “I learned the message of the song” that Jesus stands beside me, “I am more relaxed” and “have no burdens in the class” for “I can express my heart contents” through the song thus making me “more receptive to the lessons”. I know that “I can be a better student with God helping me” for “He is the Source of Wisdom.”

Interestingly, one student wrote, “There was a time I was about to cheat but then I remember the song. Why should I do something bad? I told myself. God sees what I am doing. Instead of cheating, I did my best. I know He was there to help me.”

The class song give “fresh mind” and a “calm heart.” It “relives my spirit.” Through the theme song “I forget my problems when I am in the class” for the song soothes.

There were times learners have problems before coming to class. However, after listening to the song “my mood changed from bad to good”. “I am like in a comfort zone” for “the environment becomes impressive” and “peaceful.” No wonder, “I am enjoying the class” for I have a “relaxed mind and soul.” Students should be in an environment—where they can effectively learn. Krashen’s (1981) well-known Affective Filter Hypothesis stresses that emotional variables can prevent learning. Thus, these need to be avoided.

Closer Relationship with God. Song contribute to the learners’ relationship with God. It “gives me the feeling of I can do this because I know that God is with me.” It does not only “strengthens my faith” but “adds to my spiritual life.” With this, “my relationship with God gets closer.” I “learn to get closer with God” since “I know He has best plans for me”—“enabling me to be stronger and not cry for He is always with me.” Since “I learn to internalize the song by memorizing it—I sing even after the class.” It still influences beyond the four walls of the classroom which may influence others as well. John 17: 15-17 say, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” Students are to be prepared to represent Christ.

Conclusions

Insights were gleaned from the answers of the open-ended questions, interviews, and questionnaire. The 28 sophomore tertiary students shared their experiences of having songs prior to the class sessions. They revealed that the theme song, a selected piece which was related to their class subject, helped them in their faith. The impression was that such a song was not only developing their faith during the class period but even beyond. Since the songs speaks to the heart through the lyrics, the influence was not merely confined to the four walls of the classroom but past the premises—to wherever the learners are. A careful selection of the songs is vital (Romero et al., 2012) since songs play a vital role. If songs are properly employed by the teachers, they will serve as excellent strategies for English FL not to only cultivate interest, high motivation, linguistic intelligence, and language awareness (Shen, 2009) but foremost develop the spiritual life of the learners. Taylor’s (2001) inclusion of songs in the integration of faith in learning. Songs do not only help students within the four premises of the classroom but beyond.

Recommendations/Pedagogical Implications

Songs can be effective instructional strategy in integrating faith into learning. Teachers play a role in connecting this instructional strategy towards the spiritual development of the learners. It is therefore important for teachers to have the right choice of songs that will enable learners to learn lessons that can be meaningful beyond the classroom rules. To help develop learners’ spiritual life still remain a very important for Christian institutions. As White (1990) strongly emphasizes,

True education means more than pursuing a certain course of study. It has to do with the whole person, and the whole period of existence to human beings. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. (p. 1)

Therefore, Christian educators need not only develop spirituality by an in-depth understanding of what Christian education really is, but to find ways for students to develop spiritually. It should be remembered that IFL is a “distinctive ingredient of SDA education that must be nurtured in an assertive, ongoing manner (Taylor, 2012, p. 1). Unsurprisingly, Taylor (2001) convinces that the integration of faith and learning does not result from the application of some secret technique or magic formula. Rather, it requires a foundational understanding of Christian education, a personal commitment to think and teach Christianly, and a focused effort to develop and deeply employ integrational strategies. (p. 14)

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Using Semiotics in the Analysis of Mixed Media Art

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Abstract

Semiotics in visual art communication takes the form of words, sounds, scents, flavors, actions, situations, and emotions. Through signs and symbols, visual artists communicate their message to their audience. This art-based study explored how the artist uses signs and symbols in his mixed media artworks to communicate, and how viewers interpret and make meaning on the artwork. It is anchored on Jakobson's (1960) theory of encoding in which the artist as the addresser; the artist's artworks with images/symbols as the signifier and its concept as the message, and the decoding by addressee as the viewer. Data were gathered through interviews with the artist who uses semiotics in his paintings and selected audience to analyze the artist's paintings, and interpret meanings from what they see. The findings show that the artist can effectively use his visual rhetoric through signifiers in his work without relinquishing his creative ideas and expressions, engaging and empowering his viewers to interpret his message accordingly. The audience meaning making matched artist's interpretations with accuracy in spite of the presence of struggle in their ways of looking and seeing. They exhibited similarities, differences, and to an extent redefined as they relate it to real life setting.

Keywords: *semiotics, visual art, communication, art and design literacy*

In visual arts, signs and symbols take the form of words, sound, scents, flavors, actions, situations, animate and inanimate objects; such have no natural meaning and remain as sign only until one provides them with meaning (Chandler 2018). People look at thousands of images every day, but are they seeing them? If someone catches one's attention does he or she understand the message? Every time an image, sign or symbol is interpreted to be understood, whether consciously or not, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) said, one is using the tools of semiotics to understand its signification.

Semiotics, developed by Pierce (1914) and de Saussure (1913), is the study of signs which are used to analyze a wide variety of representation, including images (Pierce, 1914 & Saussure, 1913 as cited in Playplaycreativity, 2012). Visual art consumers of today subconsciously decode composition, subject, and elements in works of art. However, the idea of representation by chance (Ferreira, 2007) where things do not follow rules, are much explored in the visual arts. The artist plays a vital role in the use of signs and symbols in his works, especially if he intends to get his message across his audience. Is there a need for a system or code to be followed by the artist as the addresser through his artworks with a conceptual meaning that stand to reach out, and activate the viewers' mind? Men tends to be driven by a desire to make meanings (Chandler, 2018 para.1) on what they see on signs and symbols, and what they represent. Visual signs, as employed by the artist, become complicated and even ambiguous when used as a concept. Ferreira (2007) posits then, that visual signs need linguistic explanation or interpretation to clear up superfluity or ambiguity and arrive at accurate interpretation, as what the artist is meaning (Ferreira, 2007 para.6). This study explored the prevalent issues on interpretations or perception by the viewers and visual enthusiasts on artists' works, as they try to give meaning to what they see; studies, however, on semiotics mostly deal on the signs or symbols linking the signifier (images, signs, symbols) and the signified (concept) overlooking the artist as the one creating concepts through visual representations, and how he can empower the viewer, the receiver of the message.

which are used by both producers and interpreters of texts and so in the visual (Chandler 2017). In creating visual imagery, the artist select and combine signs and symbols in relation to the codes, which the viewer are familiar 'in order to limit... the range of possible meanings they are likely to generate when (read) seen by others'. Codes help to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate experiences (Turner 1992).

There are three principal kinds of signs used within visual, verbal or other forms of communication: icon, index and symbol (Noble and Bestley, 2011). A symbol is a sign, which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted. Symbols are interpreted according to a rule or habitual connection or association, like an animal used as sign/symbol. The sign is connected with its object by virtue of the idea of the symbol, by which without it no connection would exist. The sign constitutes, by the fact that it is understood merely or mainly as it is. A symbol is a conventional sign, or one depending upon habit. All books, words, sentences, and other conventional signs are symbols. On icons that widely recognized sign represent its objects primarily by its similarity. A sign is an icon used as object as in visual art an element for signification. Icons have qualities which resemble those of the object they represent, although not necessarily dynamic. On pictures, Langer (1951) said that, it is essentially a symbol and not a duplicate of what it represents. Pictures resemble what they present only in some respects. What one tends to recognize in an image are analogous relations of parts to a whole. Diagrams are included by Pierce as icons although there are many resembling their objects not all in looks, it is also in respect to the relation of their parts that their likeness consists (Langer 1951).). Semioticians maintain that there are no pure icons, and that there is always an element of cultural convention involved, a usual and accepted way as social norm (Chandler, 2018).

It is crucial how an artist employs the "codes" to represent symbols and sign in his works. According to Noble and Bestley (2011), "through the creation of more and fluid and 'open' visual messages, the artist can attempt to engage in a dialogue, empower the receiver in the construction of meaning from within the message." Jakobson (1971) emphasized that the production and interpretation of visual signs (texts) depends upon the existence of codes or conventions for communication. The concepts of the 'code' are fundamentals in semiotics. Signs are not meaningful in isolation; they become meaningful only when interpreted in relation to each other (Jakobson, 1971).

Codes, if employed efficiently for communicating the addresser's (artist) ideas, can reach wider audience with a more positive result as they create meaning from what they experienced on what they saw. A code is important as Grayson (1998) puts it, that when one speaks of an icon or a symbol, one is not referring to objective qualities of the sign itself, but to his (as a viewer) experience of the sign (Grayson, 1998).

Visual artists upon exhibiting their works, or getting their works published, they are also dealing with communication. MacBean (2013) said, communicating a concept, even minutely, is often a major factor in art. Each should utilize these and other techniques of symbol to capture and create works of art that make an impact (MacBean, 2013). Communication can be a form of mind control according to Ferreira (2007) the one that has the power to speak higher and have the right speech can have power over others in certain way by making the individual's point stand above all. The same happens with artworks with a conceptual meaning that stand and challenge people's mind. Visual signs, symbols look for the possibility of a language that already exists and is used by many. Language is ruled by strong codes or rules and becomes complicated when seen in the form of visual artworks. There is also the idea of representation by chance, where things do not follow rules but are used as sign and symbols; such are explored by the visual artists. As the artists use signs and symbols, this is where the principles of semiotics come in use (Ferreira, 2007 para. 5-7), since the act of mapping and decoding will be on the part of the viewer (addressee). More often signs and symbols appear to be hidden or initially unperceived by the intended audience. In some works, signs and symbols are so abstract that they need explanation or clarification to be understood completely by the viewer (MacBean, 2013 p.3). The semiotic school is concerned with the message as a construction of signs which, through interactions with receivers, produces meaning. This school of thought views communication as an agent in the construction and exchange of meaning: by using terms like significations (related to the

constituent parts of the message), it does not consider misunderstandings to be necessarily evidence of communication failure (Noble and Bestley, 2011 p.131).

Methodology

Research Design

This art-based study will explore on how the artist makes use of signs and symbols in his works to present a vi message, and how viewers create meaning, interpret, and grasp the contextual meaning. Art-based research is a systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expression in the varied forms of the arts (McNiff, 2007). Qualitative method was used in collecting data through observation, interviewing, analyzing, and interpreting the data gathered. This study used the following framework:

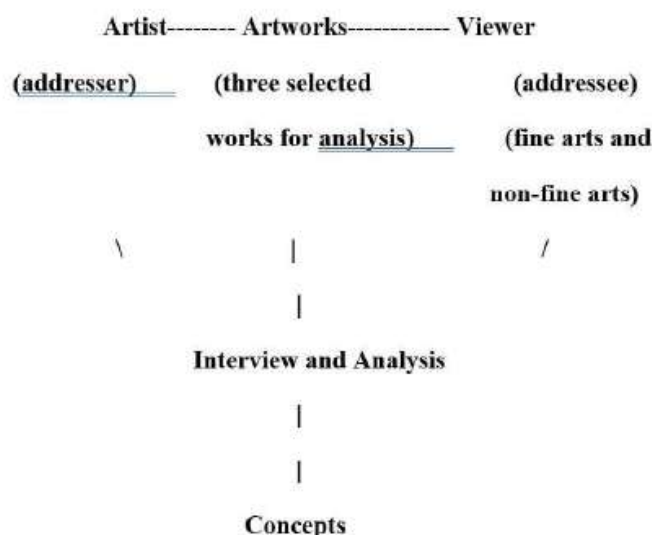


Figure 3. Framework of the study.

Selection of Participants

The participants were: for the addresser, a practicing visual artist and designer, fine arts graduate, has body of work with signs and symbols used in artworks ready for exhibition. College students of fine arts and non-fine arts were randomly selected for the addressee.

Data Collection Techniques and Procedures

Sources for the data were from interviews and artworks. The artist stands as the addresser, and his selected works as the artworks to be analyzed by the student participants that stand as the viewer or addressee. There were two groups of students who evaluated the works of art. One group was composed of fine arts students and the other groups were non-fine arts students. Three selected mixed media works of art by the artist was used for analysis. Images are vital to help participants become more involved or engaged (Balm, 2014). Images are represented as signs and symbols in abstract form or generic idea. To triangulate, fine arts students and non-fine arts students' analyses were converged (or not), with the artist's statements of his works, with fine arts students' analysis. Data triangulation validated the data and research by cross verifying the same information. It strengthens the study because of increased credibility and validity. Triangulation of data happens when multiple theories, methods or materials are used (Researchgate, n.d). The artist, fine arts students, and non-fine arts students were interviewed individually during their preferred time. Ethical consideration was practiced in interviewing the participants.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Data gathered was transcribed and coded using Saldana (2008) coding and analysis method.

Real-----> Abstract

Code> Category>Themes/Concepts >>Theory

Figure 4. Codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry (Saldana, 2008 p.12).

Repetitive patterns of action and consistencies are one of coder's primary goals to look for coding for patterns. Analysis was also used for patterns of varying forms such as "similarity (the same way), difference (happen in predictably different ways), and frequency (they happen often or seldom)" (Saldana, 2008).

Result and Discussion

Concepts and themes emerged. To answer question number one, how do the viewers interpret the artist's use of signs and symbols through his visual imagery? Two themes emerged from the recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed interviews from participants. Verbatim responses were presented to support the themes.

Ways of looking and seeing. By looking and seeing intently, struggling to make sense on what was seen; dissecting each sign and symbol to make meaning by associating them with feelings, impression, memory, experience, and their stand. The colors, shapes and tonal values have been highly considered for what they represent. In ways of looking, from Tate (n.d), all responses to works of art are conditioned by one's varied, personal and social experiences. The viewer's self, world, and experience cannot be ignored (Tate, n.d).



Figure 5. "Matuwid" 2017 mixed media art, 25.4 cm x 124.5 cm by R.A Pagaduan

The following response explained the meaning of the artwork from the artist's point of view:
 "Amidst society's waywardness, deceitfulness (black, dark) chaos (textured lines and forms in different direction) of its own doing, there are upright (straight pole or line) people (box) who will stand for the truth and for what is right (white)."

- R. Pagaduan, 64

The artist used signs and symbols to represent his intended meaning. His viewers will consciously or unconsciously use semiotics to interpret the images, objects they see; the process of generating meaning to which they comprehend or attribute meaning from the visual images they see. Curtin (2009) said, semiotics analysis post a challenge to concept in images or objects that objectively represent a meaning, as produced by the artist with intentionality (Curtin, 2009). An artist becomes also a designer in order to be effective; considering the role of the audience themselves play in the construction of meaning within the context of the visual imageries (Noble and Bestley, 2011).

The fine arts students and non-fine arts majors as participants were exposed to the artwork, without any explanation from the artist and from their perspective, the following the participant's responses. Succeeding are the responses from Fine Arts major regarding their interpretation of the artwork in Figure 5:

"Minimal and I can't understand the meaning (struggling)... I can see light is fading, the straight line divides, there is separation because of it. It reminds me pain... parang hiniwa (just like it was sliced)." -Jane 20

"I cannot differentiate at first glance; but looking intently: The strokes are trials, but in spite of it, it goes straight. I see pathway, dark and light, dark to light." -Ben 21

However, the above responses are contradicting to the responses from the non-Fine Arts students.

"Chaotic painting. Only lines that I see. A language, letter? that, I cannot understand. For me it's just like nothing." -James 19, IT major

"Coming from the sky, carrying something from the bottom, dark deep underwater. I see box coming from under the water, bringing it up. There is texture that for me, looks like stones under the sea. In the middle part looks like a mist." -Michael 20, Library Science major

The participants' responses show how they make meaning from what they see. The meaning they attribute to the symbols relates to the cultural ideas they have learned, or not aware of (Curtin, 2009 p.52). Not aware of, can possibly be one of the reasons for the viewers' struggle. Culture, Potts said, is necessary to note that it cannot entirely determine one's response. The viewer's interpretation of the symbol becomes arbitrary as de Saussure (1914) said that signifier (sign carries meaning), and the signified (concept, or the meaning itself) (Potts, 1996). Curtin identified that the "intentionality" of the meaning of images or objects is produced by the artist who created it (Curtin, 2009 P.55). Visual artists are important players in today's use of semiotics in images, signs, objects, symbols.

Exhibited were the similarities and differences on meaning making, relating to real life setting. The participants exhibited similarities and differences on their interpretations and meaning making, redefining to an extent the meaning as they relate it to their experiences. "A symbol links the signifier and the signified in a purely arbitrary way" (Curtin, 2009 p.52). Pierce (1914) said that a viewer can gain information two ways, one is looking for symbol linking the signifier (image /symbol) and the signified (concept) in an arbitrary or conventional way; two is by index or icon. An icon is a sign that is linked to a signifier through similarity in appearance. The index is described as visible sign which points to the invisible, though it can be too broad. Barthes (1985) said that, the meanings one attribute to images are not natural result of what he sees; that is, the images do not connote universality in meaning. For example, it is very difficult to attribute meaning to an artwork without a caption or accompanying text (Barthes 1985).). Semiotics theory has been instrumental in developing structuralism and post-structuralism. Structuralism focus on the "structures" or the mechanisms, such as institutions, that construct and determine artistic meanings and values. Post

structuralism is a development of structuralism, which many associate with deconstruction. Structuralism is concerned with understanding multiples systems at play that generate and differences and similarities in meaning making (Costache, 2012).



Figure 5. "The Truth of Inconsistency" 2017, mixed media art 61 cm x 91.5 cm by R.A. Pagaduan

Here is the artist's explanation of his artwork:

"When our inconsistencies in life and in character, hurt others, realizing it, we try to mend it." -R.A. Pagaduan, 64

The Fine Arts students interpret *The Truth of Inconsistency* this way:

"Magulo banda sa taas (chaotic above). There is anxiety, most likely to what is happening. The wound is about to heal, and moving on, because the middle sides are clean and smooth. Blood symbolizes pain he/she experienced." -Jane 20

"I see it as 'wound of eternity' kahit na natali (even though it was tied) there is still the scar. Stitches is long and extended and there is the possibility of lalaki pa ang sugat (the wound will still get bigger). Blood spilt, nasobrahan sa pagpigil sa sarili kaya dumugo (too much self-control that is why it bled)." -Ben 21

Here is one interpretation from a non-Fine Arts student:

"It looks like a flower, a rose. On top of the line, I can see people." – Lance 21, Office Management major

Ferreira (2007) posits that "the conventional imagery that often betray viewers, signs and symbols often taken for granted (Ferreira, 2007). Can a viewer be blamed if the image or sign is interpreted not in a conventional way? The viewer can work on the relationship between the signifier and signified which can be seen in the subject and form. Berger (2004) however said if the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, the meanings that signifies hold must be learned somehow, which implies that there

are certain structured associations, or codes. In semiotics, it is a set of shared understandings among users about the relationship between signifiers and signified (Berger 2004). In treating or creating for a subject in art, the artist aims to modify natural appearances in order to make a new form that is expressive, capable of conveying a sensation or meaning (Ocvirk, et.al. 2012).

Three themes emerged from the participant's answers regarding the artist's use of sign and symbols to present a message in his works.

The artist as author. The artist's intended use of common, and basic symbols and images, ordinary materials, found objects in his composition to address a message, that can possibly create meaningful connection between the artist and audience, empowering (audience) them. The focus of the artist can be on the transmission of his own ideas and messages, fixed on the effectiveness of communicating with an audience. It may also arise from delving into his personal interest, research and observation from his surroundings, situations and experiences, that the artist sees the need for it to be addressed (Noble and Bestley, 2011 p112).

"I use the normal and basic symbols and images in my artwork to interpret my art. The purpose of using is to have message; artist addressing humanities. I always give message in the artwork. Symbols are easily seen in our everyday environment, I observe, participate in collaborative works, discuss with fellow artists and colleagues, and do research about the topic, subject. I use ordinary and common materials to represent something; I never felt any restrictions in expressing my thoughts and ideas even I stay and work with using conventional what is common. I believe that, one has to learn the basics so to understand the art, an artwork." -R.A Pagaduan, 64

Artist and Visual Art Instructor

Part of that basic from Pagaduan's response, is the learning of symbols to what they represent, to get the message across the audiences' grasping the meaning; the artist uses conventional codes within society's norm, as symbols (items) wherein a good portion of people agree on the meaning or enforced by institutions, established long ago (Beer, 2017). French illustrator Jullien (2015) [who has created a popular worldwide graphics to depict notable political and cultural events, when asked about how he landed on his concepts, he replied, "This was the first thing—when I put my brush on paper, this was the first thing that came... It was just me trying to combine two thoughts – Paris and peace. And somehow graphically it seemed to work. I just wanted something symbolic, something that everybody could understand easily, and everybody could share regardless of where they're from... I just wanted something universal, an image for everyone." Noble and Bestley stated that an informed or engaged practitioner in visual art, may well be operating from distinct personal position derived from experiences, social, political, moral or other ideological positions (Noble and Bestley, 2011 p.193).

Visual rhetoric. Observations from surroundings, doing collaborative works and research, consultations and discussions, exchanging of ideas with others, portrayal of reality, expressing feelings and emotions, and compelling audience to think are what artists do. The artist through his visual rhetoric used the signs and symbols to form visual imagery that employ metaphoric and hyperbolic signification.

"I am depicting something that this is what in society today. People ignoring reality. My intent is to let my audience become conscious and see what is happening around them and within themselves as well. I want them to think." -R.A. Pagaduan, 64

In construction of meaning, the artist, Noble and Bestley (2011), said that it is important to consider the role that the audience play within the context of visual communication. Through the creation of more fluid and 'open' visual messages, the artist (designer) can attempt to engage the viewer in a dialogue, to empower his audience (Noble & Bestley, 2011 p.134).



Figure 6. "Crossroads II" 2017 mixed media art 49" x 36" by R.A Pagaduan

"Crossroads can be encountered and experienced by everyone in their lives. We stand at the middle of the road as we decide which direction we will take, being aware of right and wrong directions and the consequences that comes with whatever decision and direction we would choose and take."

-R.A Pagaduan, 64

"Crossroads II" signs and images evoked intrinsic and conventional meaning from the participants' meaning making, and interpretations. The fine arts and non-fine arts students matched the artist's meaning represented through signs and symbols.

Responses from Fine Arts students are as follows:

"Lines of cross of black, red, and represent complication on such levels. Upward is success and happy life, and positivity, highlights from experience or journey. The side paths, are leading to outward, another direction that struggles, black, red, another new obstacles. In the middle, its trying to find out where it is heading. -Janno 22

"There are two big pathways for the bad side. Box representing someone, and is having difficulty on what way to choose. The straight path is as if going to heaven." -Ben 21

Non-Fine Arts students interpret the Crossroads II this way:

"It's like three ways. Upward, not clear because of clouds It says what is the right way. That straight up is the upward is the right way. I see barrier on both ways, left and right." - Lance 21, Office Management major

For Rene, the visual symbols he saw is the intersection point with path going up. "The two opposite paths seen, is not becoming. Why? if we turn around like left side from the discipline of our parents it goes a wrong way. There will be consequences if we choose our own path, without their guidance." -Rene 19, Chemistry major

Viewers of visual art like anybody else, and that the essence of painting or sculpture isn't vision, but rather a meaningful connection between artist and audience (Urist, 2016). In the mixed media art "Crossroads II", the artist made use of the conventional symbols. Codes that have intrinsic value to the viewers, that most of them were able grasp the actual message as intended by the artist.

Redefining reality. "I am depicting something that this is what in society today. People ignoring reality. My intent is to let my audience become conscious and see what is happening around them and within themselves as well." -R.A Pagaduan, 64

Redefining reality from Gimbel (2015), "no subject is bigger than reality itself, and nothing is more challenging to understand, since what counts as reality is undergoing continual revision and has been for centuries." For example, the matter that comprises all stars, planets, and living things turns out to be just a fraction of what actually exists (Gimbel, 2015).

As artist, Pagaduan sees himself and his art as channel and medium to present a message through his works, "state of transition between what has been and what would or could be. Nothing is fixed or settled, everything is constant movement and evolution" (Carreira, 2010). The sparks of divine light hidden within what we perceive as difficult, even devastating, will be revealed, imbuing every seemingly trying test with a meaning previously unseen (Block, 2011). The reality with a meaning that is previously "unseen", through the use of the artist's coded or indexed signs and symbols, collective of his artistic expression and style, a portion reality is redefined.

In Jakobson's (1960) model, the artist is the addresser with his intentional message to the addressee. Certainly the artist is responsible in presenting his intent message in symbols. To be effective, the artist should bear in mind what Hall (1973) stressed about the role of interpretation of mass media text in the artists' case visual images by various social groups. Hall suggested Parkin's (1972) 'meaning systems', three hypothetical interpretative codes or positions for the audience. One, the dominant interpretation, where the viewer easily understood the artist's concept because of the code seem "natural" and "transparent", as what happened in the participants' interpretation and understanding of "Crossroads II". Two, the negotiated reading where the viewer somehow accepts the coded meaning, but modifies it as meaning-making in way/ways that reflects his/her own position experiences and interests, hence the interpretations varied. This does have contradictions. Three is oppositional, where the viewer or audience directly opposes the common code and rejects, and/or subject for criticism (Chandler, 2018 p.9). Contrast to "oppositional" viewer, postmodern approaches to art and design embrace and promulgate the view of visual communication as an important component in the plurality of contemporary culture, and seek to emphasize its role in constructing a matrix of interpretation (Noble & Bestley, 2015 p.).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of a widely understood "signifiers" in visual language by artists and designers can be a core strategic method by which marks, texts, and images can be deconstructed and interpreted so viewers can determine the underlying message (Noble and Bestley, 2015), thereby empowering them. Through the artist/designer's means, ways and his approach with the use of his visual imagery applying the Jakobson (1960) theory, the artist empowers himself through design literacy, as he becomes the visual author with intended visual rhetoric for his audience, not relinquishing his style and freedom of expression. The audience empowered, redefines the meaning contributing to array of possibilities of interpretation and meaning making.

For recommendations, continuous study on contemporary artists and the analyses of their works can be done in a wider scale of participants with different cultural backgrounds on the way they see, and their meaning making, are recommended for building up of effective and viable design matrix of interpretation.

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A Filipino Painter's Perspective of Filipino Identity: What Makes Philippine Contemporary Paintings Truly Filipino

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Abstract

There has been literature examining artists and their paintings in Philippine art history. However, understanding Filipino identity in the field of contemporary paintings from contemporary Filipino artists has not been researched extensively yet. The study, anchored on the psychoanalytic theory answered the research question, "How does a Filipino painter perceive Filipino identity and what influences his paintings?" Qualitative case study design was used to gain understanding of this concept from a Filipino painter in the field of Philippine contemporary visual arts. To accomplish this, data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with a Filipino painter who has been active in contemporary art production, and currently involved in art organizations and in the academe. According to the analysis of the interviews, the visual character (*baybayin*) incorporated in the artwork, is an essential identifying element in Philippine contemporary paintings. Another element is the subject depicting current events in the country. Furthermore, the experiences, personal philosophy, and concepts are factors to be considered towards identifying Filipino identity in Philippine paintings. This study will contribute to future research regarding the experiences of contemporary artists in the Philippines, as well as a source of reference for teachers of Philippine art history, with the intention of cultivating a love for national heritage, developing the eye to critique and understand Philippine paintings, and creating a deeper appreciation for being Filipino. Future research can focus on exploring other visual art disciplines and mediums such as sculpture, literary works and folk art, in relation to Filipino identity.

Keywords: *Filipino identity, Philippine paintings, contemporary painting*

Filipinos are known to imitate or borrow from other cultures, especially from the West and wherein they are educated to choose European or American culture and even the system of education as revealed in history (Constantino, 1984; Country Profile: Philippines, 2006; Ma. Guerrero, 1974; Mateo, 2016; Scott, 1944; Shackford, 1990). It is no secret that Filipinos have the tendency to show greater preference for the West. Connecting this issue of colonial mentality to the visual culture in the Philippines, this poses a problem in a Filipino artist's sense and understanding of Filipino identity. When it comes to the Asian counterparts of the Philippines like China and Japan, their identity in art is distinct (Jirousek, 1995; Kellaway, 2013).

The on-going issue of Filipino identity has been a subject of intense discussion among Philippine artists even from the 1960s (Lago, 2018; Lumbera, 2004; Nakpil, 2004; Tiongson, 2015,). Several authors have written about Filipino identity in art. Art created by the different local tribes are considered essential in the construction of this identity (Guillermo, 1989). When it came to painting, "genre" was a basis for identifying to what degree Philippine paintings were Filipino (Benesa, 2015) along with the "... penchant for filling up every empty space with form and detail" and "stylized, rhythmic and patterned design or organization of forms." (De Leon, 2011). Filipino art reflects the Spanish colonial heritage and the Roman Catholic influence. While other artists have chosen other topics such as Filipino issue of emigration, poverty, violence, hope and rural life that are the current issues that can be seen in the Philippines. In addition, there

are artists, like Velasco, whose focus was on Filipina figures as part of their search of Filipino identity. The contemporary Filipino art is more realistic and more figurative, said Dr. Pwee of Utterly Art (McKenzie, 2007). Moreover, they excel at figurative, surreal and abstract painting. The difference of the Filipino art to the other South-East Asian visual arts is the long exposure of the country to the Spanish influence. However, during the 19th century, the focus of the Filipino art has shifted from painting sacred images for the church using European painting techniques to the sociopolitical issues in the country with the sense of having the national pride. Emerging Filipino artists have been active in showcasing their works around Asia. As a result, the collectors have taken interest in the technique and subject matters of the Filipino Art, Michele Ruth Goh, a marketing spokeswoman for Larasati Auctioneers, said. (McKenzie, 2007). Although Philippine contemporary paintings resemble those of the West, there are a number of Filipino painters who have gained national and international attention in the art scene like Herbert “Bistik” Pajarito, Ronald Ventura, Rodel Tapaya, Buen Calubayan, Elmer Borlongan, Augusto Albor, Benedicto Cabrera, Renato Habulan, Jose Joya, and Hernando Ocampo.

Although there has been research on Filipino identity and identity crisis, Filipino characteristics in modern art, little has been written concerning contemporary Philippine painting, painters and Filipino identity in this field of visual art. Since Filipino identity can be traceable in many disciplines in the arts such as literature, music, film, etc., the researchers will only tackle the concept of Filipino identity from a painter's perspective in the field of Philippine painting.

Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following research questions: 1) How does the participant perceive Filipino identity? 2) What influences his paintings? This study was conducted with the purpose of understanding Filipino identity from a painter's point of view and the factors that contribute to his art.

Although the focus of this study is limited to the field of painting, this research on Filipino identity can also be related to other fields in Philippine art such as sculpture, architecture, etc.

Theoretical Framework

The study focuses on how the participant perceives the Filipino identity in paintings and what influences him in creating his paintings. Thus, this research is anchored on the following theories: Psychoanalytic Theory, Narrative Identity Approach, and Identity Status Theory.

Psychoanalytic theory. This theory deals with the unconscious level of the mind. This relates to the process from imagination to execution-from idea to symbols on a surface (Harris, 2006). The repetitive action of using symbols becomes a representation of an idea “via symbolism” (Kroger, 2015). The vision of an artist is depicted visually (Arnheim, 1960). Thus, this theory will support the process of idea development and interpretation in paintings.

Narrative identity approach. According to Kroger (2015), this approach “in general, focuses on an individual's reconstruction of his or her personal past, integrated with an anticipated future.” By understanding the past and current, the factors that influenced the development of his philosophy will be identified.

Identity status theory. Building on Erik Erikson's ego psychoanalytic theory, the identity status theory was developed (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, Orlofsky, 1993). The identity of an individual undergoes a process. According to Marcia et al. (1993), it is developed through the integration of the different aspects of a person, namely “values and ideals.” These two aspects are nurtured by the person's choices throughout his life, coupled with the individual's dedication to his ideals and principles. Marcia's Identity Status Theory supports the development of identity development and perception of an individual.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative case study research design to understand an artist's perspective of Filipino identity in Philippine paintings better and factors influencing his art.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the participant. The criteria for selecting the key participant are as follows: personal experience as a Filipino contemporary painter; knowledge of the topic being studied; active in contemporary art production; currently involved in local and global art organizations; and currently involved in the academe, specifically in tertiary education.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected from semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted 38 minutes and 27 seconds which consisted of open and closed questions related to one major theme: Filipino identity in art. The semi-structured interview, based on Longhurst (2016), was to give the key participant the freedom to express his ideas, to elaborate his understanding and knowledge regarding the field of Philippine painting and Filipino identity, and to describe his life and experiences as an artist in his own words. The interviews were recorded and documented using a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera.

Analysis of Data

The transcribed interview data were analyzed the Creswell and Poth's (2018) approach as follows:

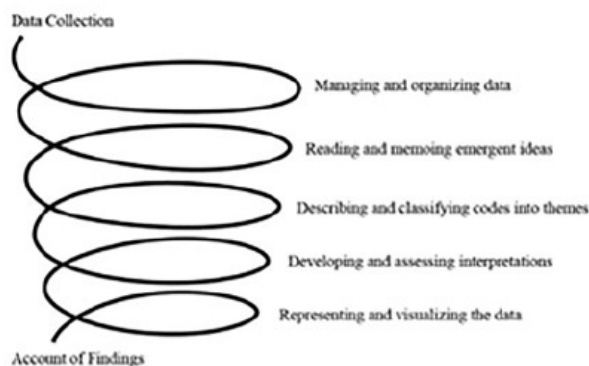


Figure 1. Data analysis spiral (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 186)

Results and Discussion

For triangulation, the themes extracted from the data transcribed were triangulated with the participant's artworks, matched with their verbatim words, and validated with the participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018).

From the transcribed interview data, themes were extracted to answer the questions based on the artist's experiences as an artist, and his views on Filipino identity in Philippine art and paintings.

These are the themes that emerged in answer to the question: "How does the participant perceive Filipino identity?" in relation to paintings.

Portrayal of events and traditions. The participant gave examples of events and traditions that characterize the Filipino identity in paintings in the present time, *sabihin nya naglaban si Lapu-Lapu saka Magellan. O. Yun ang subject, subject ni Botong Francisco. O kaya yung mga fiestas. That is Philippines.* (Let him say that Lapu-Lapu and Magellan fought. O. That is the subject, the subject of Botong Francisco. Or consider the fiestas. That is Philippines.) The term "subject" pertains to "portrayal of elements from modern and natural life" (Harris, 2006). *Si Borlongan, yun hindi mo pinapansin na subject, yun ang pinipinta nya.*

Basta kung natural na ginagawa ng Pinoy. Kaya si Borlongan, Pilipino din ang utak nun. Lalo na nagagawa niya sa visual. The participant added, Nagtatanim sa bukid, naglalaro ng sipa ay yun ang Filipino Art. Sila Habulan. Si Bencab. Si Botong Francisco. Kung ano ang nangyayari noon. (For Borlongan, those subjects that you do not take notice of are the ones he paints, the actions that Filipinos naturally do. That is why for Borlongan, his mind is also Filipino - much more in the works that he makes. Works depicting those planting in the rice field or playing “sipa” are Filipino Art. Habulan, BenCab, Botong Francisco paint what took place in their time.) In this statement, the participant mentioned renowned Filipino painters. He said *painters painted about the current situations or events that occurred during their time. Yung mga unang artist kagaya ni Damian Domingo, Edades, si Hernando Ocampo, Amorsolo, yan mga yan, pinipainting nila yung ano ang current noong time nila, kung relevant noong time nila. Pero sa panahon ng 1970s to 80s, naging history yun. Noong 1970s to 80s, pag nagpainting, para maidentify national identity, isama mo rin ang history.* (The first artists like Damian Domingo, Edades, Hernando Ocampo, and Amorsolo painted what was current and relevant during their time. But during the 1970s to 1980s, that became history. During the 1970s to 1980s, when one would paint, to identify the national identity, one had to include history.)

Inclusion of alibata or baybayin. *Though Philippine art has been influenced by the West, naapektohan talaga, kasi maraming sikat na artist. Raul Isidro, Western art yun. Arturo Luz, Albor, Locsin pa ng mga old, Fernando Ocampo. O mga Western art yun.* (It really has been affected because there are a lot of popular artists. Raul Isidro's works are Western art. Arturo Luz, Albor, Locsin, and even the older artists like Fernando Ocampo were influenced by Western Art.) However, he said alibata or baybayin is distinct as a Filipino identity. The participant also studied the baybayin or alibata, *Ngayon pinagaralan ko yung alibata, yung baybayin. Bakit? That's a Filipino identity. Kaya yung isang painting ko dyan may baybayin talaga.* (I am now studying the alibata, the baybayin. Why? That's a Filipino identity. That is why one of my paintings really incorporates the baybayin.) The baybayin is closely associated with the national identity of the Philippines (Rosero, 2018; Casal 2018). However, the world is changing and so is art. In contemporary art, the present generation is creating new styles, concepts and new ideas, using a variety of techniques and styles (Department of Art and Art Professions, 2018). Through semiotics and the inclusion of alibata or baybayin, characters in his paintings, he portrays the true feelings of the Filipino. According to the data gathered, despite the Western technique he uses in his paintings, his final work showcases this distinct Filipino identity, the alibata or baybayin, which makes his paintings truly Filipino.



Figure 2. The series of paintings portray the inclusion of the baybayin, the distinct Filipino visual characteristic.

These are the themes that emerged in answer to the question: “What influences his paintings?”

Experience. The paintings of the participant were created based on experience and the observations he had. *Pero ang point ko ngayon sa dami ng gumawa mga historical artwork, e ano pa ang gagawin mo? E ako nakikita ko. I don't want to be silent. Ang nakikita ko na mali sa society. Kaya tiningnan ko na yun mga*

inconsistencies ng mga Pilipino na itatranscribe ko sa baybayin. (However, my point is, with a great number of artists creating historical artworks, what else can you do? For me, it is what I see. I don't want to be silent. That is why I look at the inconsistencies of Filipinos that I transcribe into baybayin.) Usually, the theme of his work is the inconsistencies of the Filipino people in the society. He portrays what he calls as the unseen reality. The unseen reality. You could not see that. But you could experience it. Kaya yung unseen na yung gusto ko makita nila dito. (The unseen reality. You could not see that. But you could experience it. That is why the unseen is what I want them to see here.) The "unseen reality" he talked about are experiences such as joy, pain, and disappointment.

Philosophy. The concepts of the participant are communicated through symbols. Paano mo mai-poportray yung inconsistencies na isip ng Pilipino. Yung ningas kugon. Eh yun ang ipinuportray ko dito. Kaya humahanga ako sa square as a Christian, as a Seventh-day Adventist. Believe talaga ako sa square na shape. These are symbols. These are abstract symbols. Semiotics is communicating with symbols. (How do you portray the inconsistencies of the Filipinos? Ningas kugon. That is what I am portraying here. That is why I admire the square as a Christian, as a Seventh-day Adventist. I really admire the shape of the square. These are symbols. These are abstract symbols. Semiotics is communicating with symbols.) The participant adapted the use of semiotics because he wanted to portray the feelings and emotions of Filipino people based on his experiences in life. In addition, he wants to tease the mind of the viewers of his paintings, to create discussion. Observation, according to him, is a key factor in his creative process. He takes mental, visual notes of his interactions with people. From his observations, he was able to come up with paintings revolving around social issues. Tapos ang Pinoy mahilig sa connections. Kaya gagawa ako ng painting tungkol sa connections. Connections may be either black or white. Those are negatives. Kaya may dalawang side, black saka white. Because connections could be interpreted the positively and negatively. (And Filipinos love to have connections. That is why I will create a painting about connections. Connections may be either black or white. Those are negatives. That is why there are two sides, black and white. Because connections could be interpreted as positive or negative.)

In connection with the results, through the use of psychoanalytic theory in art and by understanding the subjectivity it implies, this theory will serve as basis in answering the research questions on "How does a Filipino painter perceive Filipino identity and what influences his painting?"

The development of his views varies from the different experiences he had as an artist. In one point, as stated in the gathered data (self-discovery/exploration), it says that while the participant was building up his career, his memorable experience was when we are college because our teachers will say if you ask, "Go to the library!" Discover... they (the professors) are challenging you to do what you want. (In college, when we would ask our teachers, they will say "Go to the library!" Discover...they (the professors) are challenging you to do what you want.) Supported by the idea of Peter and Donald Kuspit using psychoanalytic view that the best forms of new art are those that are connected with your human feelings, the attachment and detachment to relationship (Harris, 2006), it has initiated the augmentation of the participant's view in art.

On the other hand, in the participant's view in identifying what makes Philippine paintings "Filipino", he has stated that he incorporates baybayin symbols in almost all of his paintings. This implies the Filipino identification in his works. It is a repetitive action of using symbols and it has become a representation of an idea, (Kroger, 2015) a symbol of the identity of Filipino paintings.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In the Philippines, there has not been a guiding criterion given by Filipino artists to identify the characteristics that make up Filipino identity in paintings. However, one unique factor that reveals that identity is the inclusion of the alibata or baybayin in the paintings. In addition to that, the portrayal of current events within the country, including the past and present experiences of the artist, and his philosophy matter as well.

This study will contribute to future research regarding the experiences of contemporary artists in the Philippines, as well as a source of reference for teachers of Philippine art history, with the intention of

cultivating a love for national heritage, developing the eye to critique and understand Philippine paintings, and creating a deeper appreciation for being Filipino. Future research can focus on exploring other visual art disciplines and mediums such as sculpture, literary works and folk art, in relation to Filipino identity.

The results and findings of the research can be added to the current existing body of literature about Philippine painting and Filipino identity. The data obtained from the study can be used by teachers to help students appreciate cultural heritage, Philippine history and Filipino identity as seen in Philippine paintings. In addition to that, this study can be used as a reference to propagate Philippine art education in producing artworks and art forms, enriching Filipino culture in the world of visual arts by producing more Filipino-themed artworks.

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Text Mining Analysis of the Conflict of the Ages Series

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Abstract

Research regarding the writings of Ellen White has primarily relied on qualitative measures to develop insights and themes. Consequently, quantitative measures have been largely left unused in this regard. The purpose of this study was to help fill this gap through quantitative text mining analysis of Ellen White's Conflict of the Ages series utilizing an exploratory design that used word frequencies, word clouds, and topical models to discover themes. Themes were created using topic models derived from the latent Dirichlet allocation (DLA) algorithm. Results revealed the word frequencies of each of the five books in the series as well as an aggregation of the word used in the Conflict of the Ages series as a whole. A four-theme model was developed which included 1) God and His people, 2) Evangelism, 3) Old Testament concepts, and 4) Prophecy. Further findings showed that words such as "Christ", "Lord", and "God" were the most frequently used terms in the series, making the Conflict of the Ages series primarily Christ-centered in terms of word frequency. Continuing text mining analysis on writings of Ellen White is suggested for further study and validation of these results.

Keywords: *text mining, Ellen White, topical models, Conflict of the Ages*

Ellen White, co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist church, was a prolific writer of the 19th century. Over the course of more than six decades, Ellen White wrote over 50,000 pages and published several dozen books (White, 2000). Due in part to her tremendous literary output, Ellen White is also one of the most translated authors of all-time (White, 2000). The influence of her writings has been significant over the past 100 years. Only children are often leaders and have a more difficult time going along with others, especially in groups of their peers. Accordingly a typical characteristic of an only child is the carefulness that results from the extreme amount of attention they receive growing up. It is believed that independence, sociableness, responsibility, and thoughtfulness are qualities associated with the only child's position (Gustafson, 2010).

One set of writings that have perhaps had the greatest impact on members of the Seventh-day Adventist church is Mrs. White's *Conflict of the Ages series*. The five books in this series (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*) have been translated into dozens of languages and distributed throughout the world. *The Great Controversy*, in particular, is commonly distributed for its depictions of end-time events as prophesied by Ellen White.

Many scholars have studied White's writings in an attempt to identify the major themes of her work (Douglas, 2000; Fortin, 2007; General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2015). However, organizing and identifying the major themes of Ellen White's writings has relied primarily on qualitative techniques. Considering the sheer output of Mrs. White, it would be quite challenging for any group of scholars to attempt to personally read and categorize so much information.

The problem is not necessarily that qualitative perspectives are inappropriate, but rather that the inclusion of a quantitative analysis, through the use of a machine learning technique such as text mining, could provide insights that a qualitative analysis is not capable of. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify some of the significant themes of the *Conflict of the Ages* series using text mining.

Seeing the themes of the Conflict of Ages series from a quantitative machine learning perspective is beneficial in many ways. First, it provides readers of the works of Ellen White with an analysis that uncovers

relationships within her writings that are difficult to find manually. Second, the automated process removes preconceived bias that readers often bring to the text. Lastly, the results of this study set a precedent for the use of machine learning applications in the Seventh-day Adventist context.

Text Mining

Text mining is the automated processing of natural language as found in text (Tuffery, 2011). The mining of text for insights emerged in the late 1990's as a way to analyze unstructured data (Grimes, 2007). Unstructured data is essentially any data that is not stored in relational databases. It is estimated that 80-90% of all business-related information comes in an unstructured state such as text (Grimes, 2008). Examples of unstructured data include word docs, PDFs, emails, and even audio or video files.

Text mining has been used in many different purposes in business, medical, computer information science, and even the analysis of some religious text (McDonald, 2014; Mostafa, 2013; Suarez-Tangil, Tapiador, Peris-Lopez, & Biasco, 2014; Wei, Kao, & Lu, 2013). In the world of business, text mining has been used to analyze Facebook and Twitter posts about restaurants (He, Zha, & Li, 2013). Additionally, Mostafa (2013) conducted a study using sentiment analysis (a form of text mining) to capture people's perceptions about various brands of mobile phones.

In the medical world, text mining has been used to organize medical literature. For example, Wei, Kao, and Lu (2013) developed an algorithm for assisting the biocuration of medical literature. Their work was in response to how biocuration was being done manually in a slow and laborious way. In another study, the authors used text mining to find the common sentence structures used for microRNA expressions of cancer (Xie, Ding, Han, & Wu, 2013). This has led to the development of an association database that classifies articles about microRNA cancer, thus saving researchers' time when searching for such information.

In computer science, a team of researchers developed an algorithm using text-mining analysis that is able to detect Android OS malware (Suarez-Tangil, et. al, 2014). In another instance of cyber security, researchers developed a way to detect cybercriminal networks through their use of online social media (Lau, Xia, & Ye, 2014). As such, text mining has many different practical applications.

There has been some research in the use of text mining in religious text. McDonald (2014) did a text mining analysis to look for commonalities among holy text from various religious groups (Mormonism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism). The topics that were extracted through the text mining were then used to develop a self-organizing map to see specifically how much the various texts had in common. Another study (Alhawarat, Hegazi, & Hilal, 2015) looked at the word frequencies found in the Quran using text mining.

Themes in Ellen White's Writings

Several authors have attempted to categorize the major themes found in the writings of Ellen White. Knight (1996) identified seven main themes in Ellen White's writings. These themes were, "The Love of God", "The Great Controversy", "Jesus the Cross and Salvation through Him", "The Centrality of the Bible", "The Second Coming", "The Third Angel's Message and Adventist Mission", and "Practical Christianity and the Development of Christian Character."

Timm (1996) saw the themes of Ellen White slightly differently. He also had seven themes but his themes were "God as the Unfolding Center", "The Cosmic Controversy as the Framework", "The Everlasting Covenant of Grace as the Basis of Salvation", "The Sanctuary as the Organizing Motif", "The Three Angels' Messages as the Eschatological Proclamation", "The Remnant as the Missiological Result", and "Living in Accordance to the Message."

There was a great deal of overlap in the themes of Knight (1996) and Timm (1996). For example, Knight's "Great Controversy" and Timm's "The Cosmic Controversy as the Framework" appear to be essentially the same on the surface. However, the purpose of this paper was not to provide a detailed theological explanation of these themes.

Other scholars have attempted to classify Mrs. White's writings theologically and by type of book. Fortin's (2007) theological themes of Ellen White included the "Sovereignty of God", "Great Controversy", and "Sola Scriptura." White (1948) classified Ellen White's books into four categories. Namely, inspirational, biographical, admonition, and descriptive exposition. The Conflict of the Ages series falls under the descriptive exposition category proposed by White (1948).

Perhaps the most well-known classification of Ellen White's writing, at least in part, is the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These beliefs are not exclusively based on Mrs. White's writings but do lean heavily on them. The 28 beliefs are divided into six doctrinal categories which are doctrines of "God", "Humanity", "Salvation", "Church", "Christian Living", "and "Restoration."

What the work of all these scholars have in common is the qualitative nature in which the results were derived. This is not to say that they were in error. Rather, continued research into the various relationships within the writings of Ellen White would be useful in developing insights into her literary work.

Conflict of the Ages Series

The *Conflict of the Ages* series is a five book series that focuses on biblical history from the perspective of the conflict between Christ and Satan. The books illustrate and provide context to the various books of the Bible. The five books are *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*.

Patriarchs and Prophets and *Prophets and Kings* deal with the Old Testament of the Christian Bible beginning with the fall of Lucifer through the reign of David at the beginning of 1st Kings. *Prophets and Kings* continues from 1st Kings until the book of Malachi at the end of the Old Testament.

The Desire of Ages and *Acts of the Apostles* cover the New Testament. *The Desire of Ages* focuses on the Gospels and the life of Christ. *Acts of the Apostles* deals with the rest of the New Testament. *The Great Controversy* deals with the history of the church after the Apostles until the end of the millennium.

Aims of the Study

Text mining is still considered a relatively new form of quantitative analysis. Its use is well documented in industry and there has been some use of this analysis for religious text. However, there appears to be a lack of literature on the use of text mining in the writings of Ellen White. As such, this paper addressed this concern. The following objectives were addressed in this study:

1. What are the word frequencies within the individual books of the Conflict of the Ages series?
2. What are the major themes of the individual books of the Conflict of the Ages series from a quantitative perspective
3. What are the major themes of the Conflict of the Ages series by Ellen White from a quantitative perspective?
4. What are the word frequencies in the Conflict of the Ages series by Ellen White?

Methodology

The sample of this study was derived using purposive sampling. The *Conflict of the Ages* series was selected due to its cohesive nature. Many other books could have been used. However, the majority of the themes that other scholars found in Ellen White's writings have been derived from the *Conflict of the Ages* series.

Research Design

This was an exploratory design. There was no measurement in terms of means or standard deviations. Rather, this study was a search for relationships among words using an algorithm rather than human intuition.

Data Collation and Analysis

Text mining was used to analyze the five books of the Conflict of the Ages series. The five books were downloaded as PDFs from the Ellen White Estate. The five books were then compiled as a corpus.

When text mining is conducted, it is common to transform the corpus so that the results are more intelligible. The following transformations were made:

- Capital letters were changed to lower case; this prevents the same word from being counted as different such as “White” and “white”.
- Numbers were removed
- Punctuation was removed
- Stop words were removed. Stop words are common words that have no real meaning such as “the”, “this”, “and”.
- Whitespace was removed

Performing this transformation compacts the corpus and simplifies the relationships among the words.

The actual creation of the themes was done using topic models as developed through the latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) algorithm. The word frequencies and word clouds were also developed to determine relationships among the words in the corpus.

Findings

The findings section is divided into two parts. Part one provides descriptive statistics for each individual book. This section includes information on word frequencies and topics within individual books. Part two provides descriptive statistics for the *Conflict of the Ages* series as a whole. This section includes the same descriptive statistics (word frequencies and topics).

Individual Book Results

The most commonly found words in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* were “god”, “lord”, “people”, “Israel”, “men”, “Moses”, and “great”.

Figure 1 provides a bar plot of the most common words in Patriarch and Prophets.

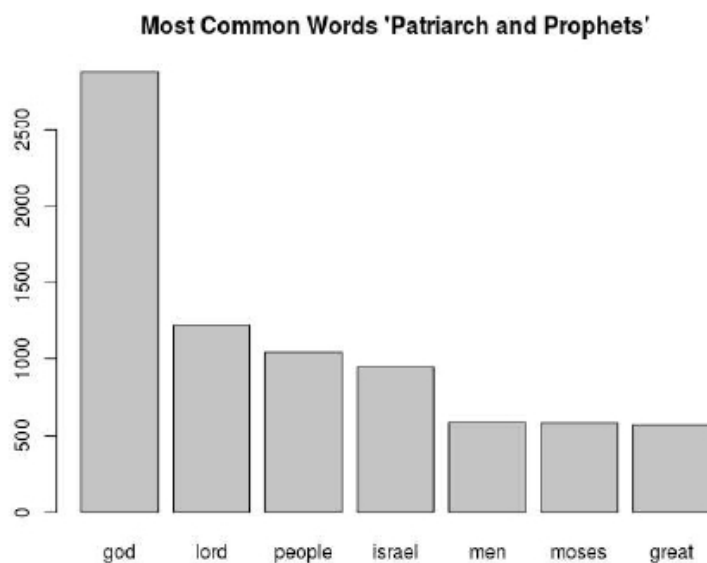


Figure 1. Word frequencies in *Patriarchs and Prophets*

A word cloud was developed to determine the fifty most common words as compared to one another. The center of the text Patriarch and Prophets was clearly “god”, “lord”, “people”, and “Israel”. Lesser words included “Moses”, “David”, “Egypt”, “Satan”, and “power”. Figure 2 provides the word cloud of patriarch and prophets.



Figure 2. Word cloud of *Patriarchs and Prophets*

A topic model with three themes was developed from *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The primary words of theme one included “lord”, “sin”, and “people” which indicated that the theme may be focused on redemption. Theme two main words included “god”, “Israel”, and “lord”. The name of theme two may be leadership. Lastly, theme three’s main words included “god”, “Moses”, and people. The focus of theme three may be identified as man’s leadership. Table 1 provides the results of the topic model (p. 5).

Table 1.

Topic model of Patriarchs and Prophets

Theme1 Redemption	Theme 2 Leadership	Theme 3 Man’s Leadership
lord	god	god
sin	Israel	Moses
people	lord	people
life	people	made
day	gods	man
great	earth	one
Israel	men	David
god	king	land
now	David	Israel
hand	divine	men

The results for *Prophets and Kings* are as follows. The most commonly found words were “god”, “lord”, “people”, “Israel”, “king”, “men”, and “gods.” Figure 3 is a bar plot of the most common words.

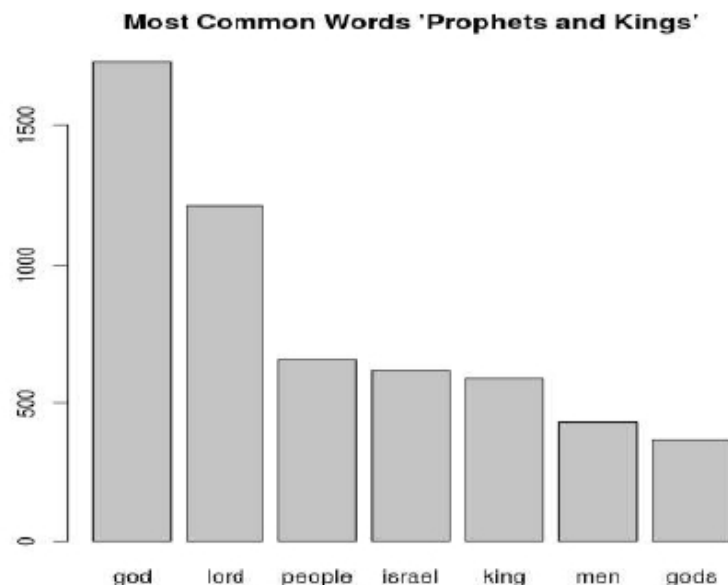


Figure 3. Word frequencies in *Prophet and Kings*

A word cloud was created to display the fifty most common words in the text. The center of the text *Prophets and Kings* was clearly “god”, “lord”, “people”, “king”, and “Israel.” Lesser words included “work”, “temple”, “earth”, “faith”, and “kingdom”. Figure 4 provides the word cloud of *Prophets and Kings*.



Figure 4. Word cloud of *Prophet and Kings*

The three themes developed seemed to be indistinguishable from each other. The first few words of theme one focused on God and people and may also be focusing on the relationship between god and man. Theme two is highly similar but includes references to “earth”, “man”, and “heart” indicating that this theme focused more towards earthly relationships. Theme three is also highly similar but mentions “prophet” and “Isaiah” which means that this theme may be focusing on prophetic ideas. Table 2 shows the themes of *Prophets and Kings*.

Table 2.*Topic model of Prophets and Kings*

Theme 1 God and Man Relationships	Theme 2 Earthly Relationships	Theme 3 Prophetic Ideas
god	lord	god
lord	god	lord
people	Israel	Israel
gods	king	king
men	come	power
king	man	prophet
evil	among	people
Israel	earth	city
made	Judah	Isaiah
many	heart	men

The most common words in *The Desire of Ages* included “god”, “Jesus”, “Christ”, “life”, “disciples”, “one,” and “man”. Figure 5 provides a bar plot of the most common words.

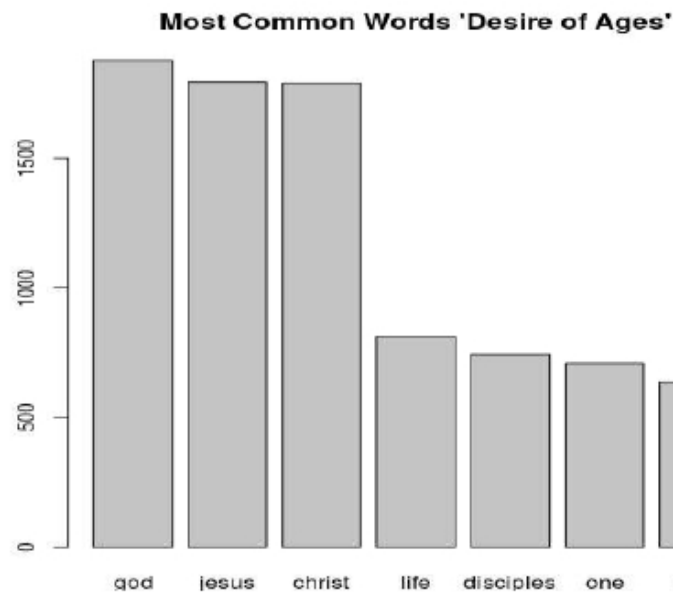


Figure 5. Word frequencies in *The Desire of Ages*

Based on the common fifty words of the text, a word cloud was formulated. The center of the text of *The Desire of Ages* appeared to be “Christ”, “god”, “Jesus”, “disciples”, and “life.” Lesser words included “saviour”, “lord”, “heaven”, “heart”, and “man”. Figure 6 provides the word cloud of *Desire of Ages*.

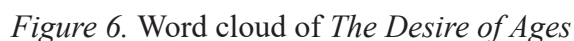
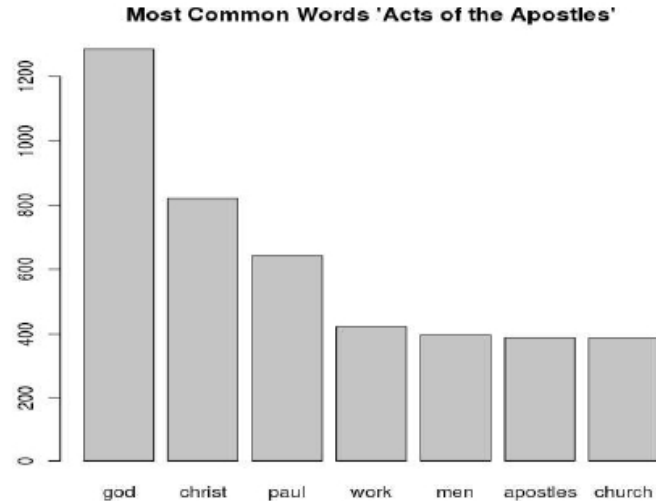


Table 3
Topic model of Prophets and Kings

The most common words in *Acts of the Apostles* included “god”, “Christ”, “Paul”, “work”, “men”, “apostles”, and “church”. Figure 7 provides a bar plot of the most common words.



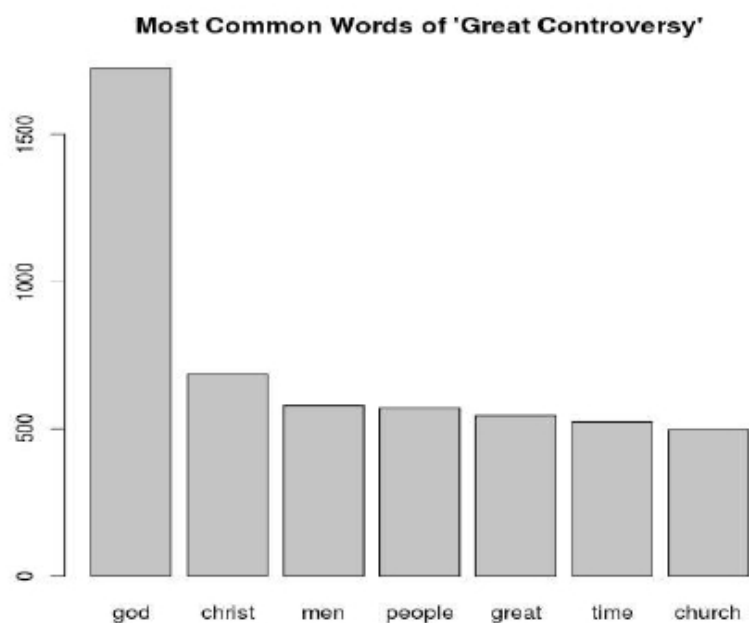
A word cloud was generated using the fifty most common words in the book. The center of the text in *Acts of the Apostles* appeared to be “god”, “Christ”, “Paul”, “men”, and “church.” Lesser words included “love”, “work”, “power”, “acts”, and “peter”. Figure 8 provides the word cloud of *Acts of the Apostles*.

Three themes were extracted from *Acts of the Apostles*. Theme one was Christ and His people and included words such as “Christ”, “church”, and “acts”. Theme two was works and faith and included such words as “god”, “Paul”, “faith” and “works.” Theme three is evangelism and included such terms as “Christ”, “apostles”, “world”, and “work”. Table 4 shows the themes of *Acts of the Apostles*.

Table 4.*Topic model of Acts of the Apostles*

Theme 1 Christ and His People	Theme 2 Works and Faith	Theme 3 Evangelism
god	god	Christ
Christ	Paul	apostles
might	work	god
church	come	Paul
Paul	one	men
acts	life	world
spirit	spirit	lord
lord	made	work
one	faith	power
apostles	men	faith

In the book *The Great Controversy*, the most common words were “god”, “Christ”, “men”, “people”, “great”, “time”, and “church”. Figure 9 is a plot of the most common words.

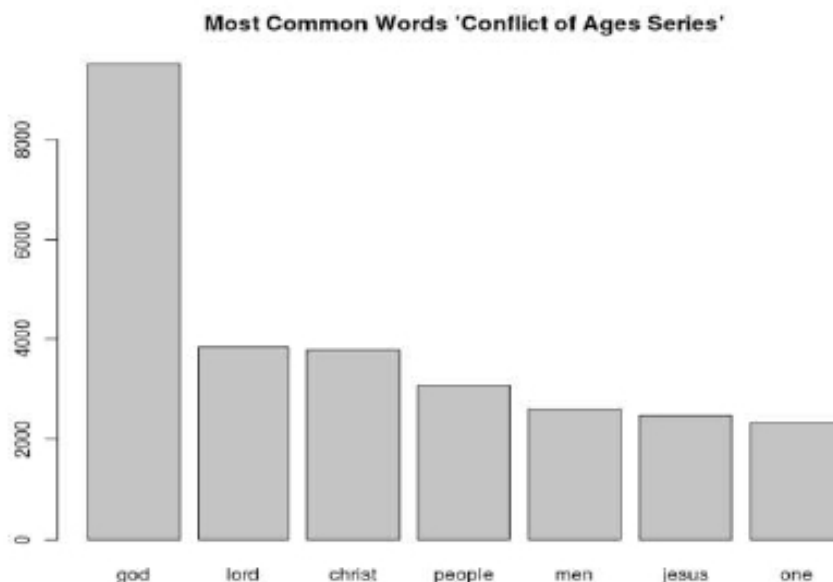
*Figure 9. Word frequencies in The Great Controversy*

The word cloud revealed that the most critical words of the great controversy included “god”, “Christ”, “men”, “law”, “time”, “bible”, “church”, and “power.” Lesser words included “sin”, “world”, “lord”, and “day.” Figure 10 is the word cloud of *Great Controversy*.

Table 5 shows the three themes.

Theme 1 God and His Word	Theme 2 Heaven and Earth	Theme 3 Conflict and Prophecy
god	god	god
word	Christ	time
people	men	men
church	lord	power
lord	earth	Christ
law	spirit	people
one	holy	world
great	church	man
see	life	Satan
truth	heaven	come

For the entire *Conflict of the Ages* series the most common words were “god”, “lord”, “Christ”, “people”, “men”, “Jesus”, and “one”. Figure 11 is the plot of these words.



The word cloud reveals the following words as central to the Conflict of the Ages series – “god”, “lord”, “Christ”, “people”, “Jesus”, and “time”. Lesser words included “death”, “sin”, “law”, and “holy” (see Figure 12).

Seven themes were originally selected for the Conflict of the Ages series as these are the number of themes uncovered by Knight (1996) and Timm (1996) using other methods. However, in this study, seven themes were extremely similar and overlapping. Therefore, a four-theme model was developed. Theme one was focused on God and His people with such terms as “Israel”, “king”, and “men”. Theme two shifted to evangelistic themes and included “god”, “Christ”, “disciples”, and “work”. Theme three was Old Testament concepts such as “Moses”, “David”, “people”, “lord”, and “great.” Theme four was more prophetic in nature and included such terms as “time”, “truth”, “power”, “god”, and “great” (See Table 6, p. 9).

Table 6.*Topic model of Conflict of the Ages series*

Theme 1 God and His People	Theme 2 Evangelism	Theme 3 Old Testament Concepts	Theme 4 Prophecy
god	god	god	god
lord	Christ	lord	Christ
people	Jesus	people	church
Israel	life	Israel	men
king	one	Moses	time
men	disciples	great	great
gods	men	men	truth
Judah	man	David	people
prophet	work	man	power
great	power	now	faith

Discussion and Conclusion

The religious nature of the Conflict of the Ages series clearly comes out in the analysis of the text. The series is centrally focused on ideas related to Christ and His people. In terms of the themes, they vary radically from the work on Knight (1996), Timm (1996), Fortin (2007), and Douglas (2000). However, this is due to the difference in analysis. Prior researchers took a holistic approach to developing themes in the work of Ellen White. This study used a highly thorough algorithmic approach yet is difficult to interpret.

The themes found in this study capture the main thrust of the Conflict of the Ages. If this series had to be summarized it is about God and His people (theme 1) over the course of history (theme 3) attempting to reconnect (theme 2) before the time is fulfilled (theme 4). In many ways, this is similar to Timm (1996) and Knight (1996). However, neither of these scholars has indicated that the order of the themes makes any difference. In this study, it is claimed that perhaps order matters due to the chronological order in which the Conflict of the Ages series is written.

One major finding was not found in previous literature. From a quantitative perspective, there was not much evidence concerning the Sanctuary, Sabbath, or even law. Given the theological distinctiveness of the sanctuary and Sabbath this is somewhat surprising (Loman, 2015). However, the absence of the law in terms of word frequencies provides further proof that the writings of Ellen White are Christ-centered and not as legalistic as some have alleged (Fortin & Moon, 2014).

Recommendations

This study left much for future study. It would be useful to do further quantitative analysis of the Ellen White's writings. Examples included analyzing the Testimonies to the Churches series or looking more closely at books focusing primarily on health. Finding the eight themes of NEWSTART in the health writings would be a significant confirmation in this regard. In addition, other forms of text analysis such as a sentiment analysis would further enable people to assess the emotional quality of Ellen White's writings from a quantitative perspective.

There were limitations to the outcomes of this study. Although quantitative methods were included, the actual implementation of the algorithms employed was still subjective. In addition, the interpretation of the various themes that were developed, as well as the number of themes to generate, was also subjective. As such, it is possible to replicate the study while having widely varying understanding of the results.

The application of machine learning concepts to the writings of Ellen White is a distinct contribution to the literature that blends data science with concepts that are of value to Seventh-day Adventists. This study showed that although the themes are difficult to extract they are focused on Christ and God.

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Biblical Principles on Responsible Parenthood in a World Challenged by Uncertainty

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Abstract

In the increasingly uncertain world in which we find ourselves, parenthood brings difficulties and responsibilities. The scriptures provide sound advice on the principles that might direct decisions before parenthood is entertained. These include considerations encompassing the physical, mental, social, and spiritual domains. Are we able to provide the guidance and support necessary in the environment we find ourselves? In making these decisions, alternative interpretations are suggested regarding the instruction to “fill” the earth and to have “dominion” over it. An overarching instruction given in scripture is for the human family to reason analytically and creatively. This encompasses all aspects of human endeavor.

Keywords: *responsible parenthood, Christian responsibilities, higher mental abilities*

Contributors to the uncertainty we experience differ widely worldwide. Natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes, floods, and tropical storms, although increasing in frequency, have caused fewer deaths in recent years, but have impacted more people with greater economic hardship. There is no comfort to those living in the Atlantic and Pacific hurricane belts or those who live along the ring of fire stretching on the perimeter of the Pacific Ocean or find themselves in the economically-challenged parts of the world.

Changing rainfall patterns, slated to human excesses, particularly in the use of fossil fuels, have been blamed for the substantial and continuing rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and the consequent warming of the earth due to the greenhouse effect. The atmospheric carbon dioxide levels of interest for health (above 426 ppm) are below those at which it is hoped to stabilize them. Current levels are generally below danger levels, with adverse effects on human function evident occasionally. Acidification of oceans and the consequent effects on lowering the growth rates of many shell-forming marine organisms is a more common occurrence. Then the air and sea temperature changes have exerted follow-on effects on precipitation patterns and contribute to drought severity, flooding, and other sequela. Irrespective of one's views on the relationship between atmospheric pollution and changing weather patterns, the undeniable fact remains that agricultural and husbandry has become uncertain in parts of Africa on account of desertification and recurring droughts. Added to this, low lying western tropical Pacific islands have experienced significant sea level rises, which is an obvious point of concern.

Those unfortunate enough to be found in regions plagued by political turmoil and unrest are particularly prone to hardship. Conflict brings in its train cessation of regular educational opportunities, food shortages, starvation, disease, physical abuse, and often death. The Myanmar Rohingya crisis is a reminder that the world peace body, the United Nations (2016), is largely powerless to relieve such people from their misery.

More subtle causes of misery plague the developed countries. There the lower sections of society suffer from economic pressures, so joining the millions of others throughout the world who live below the poverty line. Many do not have access to social support mechanisms making their existence fragile. Those who are forced to flee can suffer untold hardships, misery, betrayal, and even slavery.

More subtle pressures afflict all Western societies and others too. The veritable plague of crime-laden films, violent and destructive electronic games, the ready access to pornography, and the often easy

route to drug usage sweeping the world, will impact our lives and those of our families either directly or indirectly.

Various solutions to these issues are offered from time to time including strong man tactics, as in the Philippines under Duterte, where extra judicial killings to rein in the drug trade appear to be an established feature of life there. Others have attempted various forms of population growth limitation, as they believe there is more than a causal relationship between population increase in certain countries and the difficulties experienced in society. Some of these schemes have been more successful and humane than others.

Indeed, it cannot be denied that those regions of the world recording live birth rates above replacement levels commonly experience a raft of difficult living conditions; slum living appears to be the norm. Arguments asserting that there are no population issues and that there is more than sufficient food to supply human need worldwide represent theoretical musings that do nothing to relieve the suffering. So, in the face of these pressures brought by the crowded cities of the world, what principles might guide a Christian in terms of responsible parenthood?

We intend to identify biblical principles involved in responsible parenthood without providing comments on the targets that might be set or the manner in which these could be reached. These are matters for personal consideration and resolution. Before addressing the general principles, one overarching principle was identified.

Higher Order Mental Abilities

The ability of the human brain is remarkable. Our ability to think in complex abstract terms, reason from cause to effect, display creative genius and unique ways of thinking, pursue knowledge for its own sake, write, and display complex social skills are some of the features that distinguish us from other life forms.

On account of the advances of science and the speculative excesses sometimes found there, the uniqueness of the human race has been diminished. However, no animal has anything remotely capable of challenging human capacity in expressing thought symbolically, to synthesize information to gain new understandings, and to show strong moral sensitivity. Our ability to communicate is dependent on our capacity to generate a set of rules or patterns (syntax) and to interpret a complex sequence of words or symbols to make meaning. Other animals do not possess this ability.

Our abilities are far in excess of any other created form. The puzzle for non-believers in a creator-God is to generate a logical bridge of emergence of human capabilities from the simpler organisms. Such efforts look infantile at best and absurd at their worst.

Such differences were evident from the beginning. Humans were created with a powerful brain, the ability to communicate, and to invent meaningful terms for morphologically distinct animal groups possessing characteristic behaviours (Gen 2:19, 20). This indicates that they had highly developed analytical and creative abilities.

The incredible analytical abilities given were designed to be used to reason from cause to effect and vice versa. This is perhaps no more evident than in the first biblical account written, the book of Job. There an extended discussion is recorded between Job and his friends. The later argued, in appeals to popular opinion, that the reason for Job's misfortunes were his gross misdeeds and his failure to admit them and ask God's forgiveness (e.g., Job 4:7, 8 8:4-6; 11:13-20; 22:5-10, 21-30). Job, on the other hand, knowing his own thoughts and relationship with God, refused to agree. He did not find a satisfactory answer to his suffering, but nevertheless trusted in God (Job 9:17; 10:2, 7; 13:2-5).

Job confronted his friends with perceptive observations (chap. 21) and considered their line of argument foolish (Job 21:34). He observed that the wicked did not receive their just rewards in this life (vv. 7-21) and there was no reasonable explanation for the diverse fates of humans, with one dying suddenly and another in agony and bitterness (vv. 22-26). Interestingly, the book ends with God condemning the shallow thinking and reasoning of Job's friends, as evidenced by their speeches (Job 42:7).

The Bible is replete with examples of both poor and sound reasoning. The analytical thoughts of Jethro on the poor management skills of Moses stand as an early example (Exod 18:12-27). Then we

find Nehemiah thinking through the complex and delicate issues surrounding the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. He came up with a bold approach to king Artaxerxes and then for the people on site doing the work (Neh 2:1-9, 18; 3:1-32; 4:1-23). God blessed his initiatives.

In fact, God instructs all to be analytical in their approach to matter dealing with the nature of sin and of salvation (Isa 1:18). In a similar vein, an angel (Rev 1:1) revealed many events to the apostle John concerning events in the future. The initial instruction given was to the seven churches represented by the period of religious history. In this brief, members were and are urged to heed the instruction given and to consider the consequences of inaction on the one hand and remedial solutions on the other (Rev 2 & 3). Then, when speaking of end-time events, the angel messenger sent charged readers, “Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666” (Rev 13:18). In a follow up to this instruction, another angel urges all those who are observing world events, listening to the voice of conscience, and engaging the reasoning powers to “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues” (Rev 18:4). Some heavy analytical thinking is here indicated.

We would be remiss to mention the many examples from Jesus’ ministry where he challenged listeners to become analytical thinkers, to reason about the events of history (Matt 16:2-4; 24:15-22; Luke 24:25, 44-49), the place of tradition and settled social practices in the life (Matt 15:6-9, 13, 26-28; John 9:24-41), how they should relate to the challenges faced in life (Luke 12:22-34; 21:29-36), plan for the future (Mark 13:3-27), and for entrance into the immortal realms (Matt 16:24-28; 22:2-14; 25:1-13; John 3:14-21). In His famous parable of the talents, He condemned those that had organizational and thinking ability and failed to use it (Matt 25:14-30).

These examples urge us, as privileged members of God’s creation, to use all our mental abilities. This is our duty, part of our stewardship. Now, these abilities have been nicely delineated in a revised hierarchical structure by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). The categories identified in the cognitive domain are: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. The categories differ in complexity, with the last-mentioned categories representing the most developed and valued. As we progress in our learning experience from childhood onwards, so the higher cognitive skills are developed. It is intended that we use the skills given to the highest level.

Dominion Over and Filling the Earth: Stewardship Responsibilities

The instruction given to Adam to exercise dominion over the world and to fill it with his own kind has been variously interpreted. The idea that the world was created for humanity to exploit is of ancient origin. A prevalent idea expressed early in the Christian church was that it did not matter all that much how the animal kingdom was treated. Stewardship did not figure strongly in statements. The stewardship view has been championed recently in the encyclical *Laudito Si* in which the Pope called for a greater understanding of our responsibility to the creation and to consider this part of a personal conversion experience, which he called “ecological conversion.” Such a conversion involves abandoning an exclusively utilitarian view of the biological world and being more aware of the information contained in God’s second book of knowledge and our responsibilities. A similar emphasis is placed on God’s second book of information by the apostle Paul (Rom 1:20).

This brings us to the Hebrew word used for dominion or rule. It is *וָדָדָּ* “weyrdu” and comes from the root *רָדָּ* “rādā,” which means, “to have dominion,” “to rule,” “to subjugate,” and “to dominate.” The verb weyrdu is in the jussive verbal form. The jussive form is used only in the positive volition known as “volitive modality” of the second and the third person. That is, the jussive expresses the speaker’s wish or desire. In this context, weyrdu is in a jussive of wish for God to take an action, and is best translated by the expression, “let them have dominion.” The verb often stresses dominion by force, but this is not always so (Ps 49:14; cf. Matt 20:25, 26). Dominion may be gained by upright example and by serving others; these are the elements that reflect God’s character. In Genesis 1:26, 28, the verb is used with positive nuance in which humans are created to rule over all the creation of God. In other words, it is a dominion not over a

fellow human but over the creation of God. Both humans (Adam and Eve) of “the primal pair are called to accountable dominion, sociability, and fruitfulness.” Humans are “God’s image-bearer on earth.” God created humans in His image as representatives to exercise stewardship over the rest of His creation.

A reading of Genesis 1, verses 26 and 28 must be paired with the companion reading in chapter 2, verse 15 (we take chapters 1 and 2 as describing a single creation event): “let them [humans] have dominion” (1:26) and to them He said, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion ... over every living thing” (1:28). Presumably between verses 26 and 28, Adam was alone for the next statement says: “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (2:15). When this is done, it becomes evident that the action words used in chapter two (verbs: tend and keep) provide the understanding that God’s specially prepared garden, His chosen place for meeting Adam, was given over to Adam’s care. He was to exercise exquisite stewardship of the garden and tenderness towards the animals in it because it was God’s special allocated assignment. There God met with the race at regular intervals, which could have functioned also as a time to seek or receive advice about management issues from the Master Planner (Gen 2:19, 20; 3:8, 9; cf. Job 38, 39).

The idea of accountable dominion or stewardship is the paramount thought conveyed. Ultimately God declares that He retains ownership of His entire creation, not just a garden (Ps 50:10, 11). A thorough understanding of the word dominion involves the concept of forming relationships with the subjects under one’s stewardship allowing valuable lessons to be learned and, under the rubric of care, seeking to know how they can serve human needs. Such an interpretation is consistent with the advice that God cares for His creatures (Ps 147:9; Luke 12:6); nothing less is expected of us (Rev 11:18). Stewardship is about personal involvement and being responsible for decisions made (Luke 12:35; 16:1-11). It has been truly said that the failure of humans to understand and exercise dominion is at the root of the problems that we see unfolding all around us.

The ostensibly more difficult question relates to the concept of filling the earth with humans. Commonly this has been taken by many to mean to fill to the full, without limitation. The Hebrew verb מָלַא (*mālē’*) has both a spatial and temporal meaning. In the spatial sense the verb has to do with the act of making that which was empty full (Gen 1:22; 42:25; 2 Kgs 4:6; Joel 3:13). However, this need not imply filling to absolute capacity or brim full (Gen 24:16; 1 Kgs 18:35; Ezek 30:11; 35:8). In the temporal sphere, it commonly refers “to the completion of a specified segment of time.” That is, waiting to complete some task, assignment or to wait for the fulfilment of a time specified in an agreement (Gen 29:21; Lev 12:4, 6; Num 6:5, 13). In other words, the idea of fulfilling the task or vow is the key concept.

Conceivably, God’s ultimate purpose might be considered in the occupancy of the planet. Did it have both spatial and temporal dimensions? From the beginning, agricultural pursuits were planned for the race and their food was to be of plant origin (Gen 1:29). The members of the human family were to be engaged in useful activities interacting with the biological entities in His created world. This would appear to indicate that city dwelling was not part of, or at least not a large part of, the overarching plan (Gen 11:1-6; cf. Isa 65:21, 22; Rev 21:10-21; 22:1-5). In order to support cities, intensive agriculture and technological advances are necessary associates. These developments move us into the modern era and we know that, even for those engaged in agricultural activities, the focus is on economic factors rather than on a thoughtful interaction with the creation and learning from it. The proportion of the world population living in cities has moved past fifty percent and will continue to increase. This figure appears to represent a statistic out of line with the original purpose designed for the human family.

Another line of argument might be generated by expanding on the concept that humans were made “in Our [God’s] image, according to Our likeness” (Gen 1:26, NKJV). Here perfect individuals were being described, for God, Himself is perfect (Matt 5:48; 1 John 4:8). The aim set before Christians in the fallen state is to be perfect in a relational sense (Matt 5:48). This represents a command from Jesus. This instruction encompasses all aspects of our lives. Now the word “perfect” (*teleo*) has a cluster of meanings, “it refers to something that is ripe, mature, perfect, or complete.” The individual has understood God’s “purpose” or “goal”. An individual fulfilling God’s purpose is considered perfect or fully committed. This

command applies equally in all areas of human behavior including care for the environment, fulfilling our family duties, and in our relationship and care of others.

A third element to consider is that “that each of you know how to manage his sexual impulses in a holy and honorable manner, without giving in to lustful desires, like the pagans who don’t know God” (1 Thess 4:4, 5, CJB). While the context speaks of immoral sexual activity outside of marriage, the primary underlying thought is personal responsibility for our actions. Immoral and indecent acts inside marriage are a well-known statistic.

In aggregate then, when we join personal responsibility with analytical thought, we end with a conclusion that may radically differ from that of some other Christians in regards fulfilling God’s purpose in managing His creation. At present, His creation is being crowded to extinction in many areas. Greedy destruction of other parts of the ecosystem is being mindlessly pursued for economic gain. The record says that destruction of the world at the time of the universal Flood was on account of every thought being evil and focused on self-interest (Gen 6:5). This might be a point to consider at this time in earth’s history.

Responsible Parenthood

In this period of earth’s history leading up to the second Exodus, there surely are lessons to be learned from God’s instruction during the first exodus. We have incorporated some of the information in the following Table and refer readers to a fuller account of an analysis already published. During the first exodus, God introduced the elements now familiar to us in the Newstart program. This means that a good place to commence is probably with the physical domain, since the above mentioned program does have an initial emphasis on this domain.

Physical domain. Maintaining stewardship of physical health is a prerequisite for fulfilling God’s plans for us in the other areas of activity and influence. Health reform is best commenced by adopting the diet originally given to the human family. There is a wealth of scientific data standing behind the biblical advice. For example, the Bible prohibition against eating the blood and fat of animals stands vindicated; the evidence will not be repeated here. Equally, the value of exercise, fresh air, rest, sunshine, and the use of pure water is well understood in scientific circles.

Perhaps just a few words of explanation are merited in the area of the genetic legacy likely to be given to our children. Originally, brother and sister, and presumably cousins, intermarried, as evidenced by the fact that Cain obtained a wife. This all was changed at the time of Moses (Lev 18:6-17) for the simple reason that the magnificent machinery made at the beginning was malfunctioning (mutations) due to the accumulating effects of sin. Failure to be cognizant in this area is illustrated in the Bible where the blood line connected with Goliath was similarly disadvantaged as he was (1 Sam 17:23; 21:18-22). The condition the giants were suffering from was probably due to a non-cancerous tumor of the pituitary gland, due to a mutation, known to cause gigantism, multiple digit formation, and poor eyesight.

Education domain. In ancient times as in the modern era, education commences in the home where children learn to speak and to develop habits of patience and concentration. The advice given by Solomon in Proverbs (Table 1) urges children and youth to listen to the counsel received from parents. Parents have an ever-broadening assignment, as their children grow, to lead them into good moral habits through home education. They are to help children develop a balanced view of their origin, destiny, abilities, opportunities, values, and responsibilities. Loving, accepting and involved parents, who have a democratic parenting style and who get along well, assist the development of a realistic concept of the children’s potential and dignity as individuals.

Christian education outside the home also exists on account of the concern to effectively transmit moral values and other core values such as character development, relationships, and service to others. Surrounding children with dedicated role models during their formative years is the best guarantee that they will internalize values. The Christian community believes that moral values came directly to humanity as a result of divine revelation (Exod 20:1-17; 31:18). These principles represent the gold standard for all moral thought.

The dedication of parents to child instruction commences close to birth, for the early impressions indicating dependence and faith in God's word, His prophets, and the promises of His word are strong and will last a lifetime (Prov 22:6; 2 Tim 3:15). It is at this time too that strong impressions can be made by drawing lessons from nature, God's second book of information.

Indeed, this is one of the great purposes of the Sabbath. John the Revelator links creation, redemption, and the Sabbath together in his end-time message (Rev 14:6, 7). God's love and care are emphasized on this day amidst expressions of love and care among the human family. As created intelligent beings, we have duties of care for God's creatures and the natural world too, which can be taught on this day (Gen 1:29, 30; cf. Exod 20:8-11; Rom 8:20-23).

Christ's example of taking illustrations from the natural world is a good practice for parents to follow, for that which can be seen and moves have a much more lasting impression than an abstract thought. From God's second book of nature many lessons can be taught about God's character, lessons of industry and cooperation, and the ecological principles on which the world was fashioned. Lessons taken from nature can be used to remind of Christ's parables and, when in future years they look on these same scenes, they will remember the instruction given.

Knowledge and wisdom commence with instruction about the origin of the world, sin's entrance, and God's rescue plan (Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10). God instructs people of all ages to reason concerning the significant issues of one's life and destiny (Isa 1:18; cf. Deut 30:19). This is part of the educational process at home and later to impress upon all that at the judgment there will be only two classes of people recognized by God—the lost and the saved (Matt 25:32). The Bible teaches mostly by inference and suggestion about the other mental qualities that are to be developed. The story of Daniel and his friends (Dan 1:17-20) indicates that the highest intellectual attainments are meant to be realized and are approved by God in those who have the unselfish ambition to bring glory to Him alone. The higher order mental powers are required to decipher some of the trends in religio-political developments in the world leading up to Christ's coming (Rev 13:18).

The great lesson that is to be taught to all children through their schooling experience is that they should endeavor to reason from cause to effect and vice versa (Prov 26:2). Those who cannot learn from the experiences of others or nature are destined to learn through their own disappointments (Prov 6:6). One area in which this is more delicate and difficult is in the realm of human relationships.

One of the delicate tasks of parents is to train their children to be emotionally intelligent. Individuals are likely to be emotionally healthy if they learn to adjust to the changing world in which they live within a supportive environment designed to satisfy human needs. Our ability to know and manage our own emotions and understand and respond to the emotions of others is essential to our ability to get along well with others and be effective leaders. Clearly, our emotional skills are part of our character.

Solomon tells us that we should not be in a hurry to express anger, as this is the way taken by foolish people. His father also advised all diligently to control their wrath, for "it only causes harm" (Ps 37:8; Eccl 7:9). The great Christian apostle Paul advised his listeners to get anger under control quickly. Certainly "do not let the sun go down" before you settle the matter was his advice (Eph 4:26). Emotional peace is the key to a pleasant life.

When emotions are out of control for too long, health and well-being are adversely affected. We may attempt to manage emotions by what we do, read, listen to or view. Most would agree whole-heartedly that we should be temperate in all things including our emotions. This advice is needed by all who would live a successful life (1 Cor 9:25).

Table 1.

Main Responsibilities Identified in Scripture for Parental Considerations upon Entering Parenthood

Responsibilities Identified	Failure to Uphold	Positive Statement Regarding Adoption
Physical domain		
Physical needs planned and provided for	Prov 6:6-11; 19:15; Eccl 10:18	Gen 47:24; 2 Thess 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8
Health of wife/mother given priority	Exod 21:22, 23	Exod 20:13; Matt 24:15-19; Eph 5:28, 29
Genetic robustness of offspring is reasonably considered	2 Sam 21:20-22	Deut 27:20-23; Lev 18:6-17; cf. Gen 20:10-12; 26:7:24:15
Principles of health adopted	Lam 4:5; Ezek 23:25	Gen 1:29; Lev 3:17; 1 Cor 6:19, 20
Education domain		
Parents are dedicated to giving sound moral advice	Prov 15:20; 30:17; 1 Kgs 14:22; 15:26; 22:52; 2 Kgs 15:9; 21:20; 23:32; 24:8, 9	Prov 1:8; 13:1; 15:5; 22:6; 23:22; Eccl 5:4
Reverence for God's prophets and their writings is taught	1 Kgs 22:8, 17, 18, 34-37; Jer 22:21, 22	Deut 18:15-19; 2 Chr 20:20b; 2 Tim. 3:15
Reverence for God's second book of information (His creation) and its care is taught	Rev 11:18 (last part)	Gen 2:15; Rom 1:20; 1 Cor 4:2
Knowledge is given and analytical and creative thought is encouraged	Ps 75:4; Prov 1:22; 8:5; 24:7	Isa 1:18; Prov 26:2; Rev 13:18; 1 Pet 1:13-16
Management of poor behavior is addressed, i.e., Emotional intelligence developed.	1 Sam 3:13, 14	Prov 3:12; 13:24; 22:15; 23:13, 14
Social domain		
Monogamous relationship ideal is upheld	Gen 29:31; 30:1, 2	Gen 2:22-25; Deut 17:17; Prov 5:15-19; 18:22; Titus 1:6
Harmonious home atmosphere is developed and maintained	Prov 19:13; 21:19	Prov 17:1; Eph 6:4
Active, positive, community socialization is initiated	1 Tim 5:13	Prov. 18:1; Rom 13:1-7; Heb 10:25; 1 Pet 213-16
Industrious and cooperative attitudes are taught	Eccl 10:18; Ezek. 16:49	Prov 31:10-31
Spiritual domain		
Instruct in moral principles and acceptable human relationships is embraced	Prov 5:12-14; 2 Chr 28:19; Jer 29:32	Gen 35:2; Prov 4:10-12; 19:27; 22:6; Eph 6:4; Titus 1:6
Responsibilities Identified	Failure to Uphold	Positive Statement Regarding Adoption
Communal involvement/worship is promoted	Ezek 20:12, 13	Neh 8:10; Heb 10:25

Instruct on the place of law and grace, faith and works, and how assurance of salvation can be gained is accepted	2 Kgs 22:11-13; Isa 17:9-11; Amos 2:4	Deut 6:1, 6-9; 11:18-20; 12-14; Prov 4:1-4; Mal 4:4-6; Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:10
Ambassadorial role/responsibilities understood and transmitted	Ezek 39:21-26; Matt 21:28-31	Matt 28:19, 20; 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph 6:13-20
Joyful/thankful attitude is taught through practice	Deut 28:45-47; 32:15	Deut 12:7; Ps 5:11; 95:1, 2; Luke 24:51, 52
One's standing before God is taught as a personal issue	Matt 22:9-14	2 Kgs 14:6; Ezek 18:19-28; 33:12-16
Teach to pray	—	Luke 11:1

Social domain. The social domain involves families, church and community relationships. Family relationships were the focus of attention at the institution of the Passover, on the eve of departure from Egypt. Families were to gather together, eat together and thus offer tokens of their loyalty to God (Exod 12:3, 21, 22). A time of family worship was specified at Sinai (Exod 20:8–10) and the daily offering of a lamb morning and evening was to remind the family of their dependence on and daily appointments with God (Exod 29:38–46). The head of the family was to guide his household as a sacred responsibility (Josh 24:15). In the giving of the Law, special mention too was made concerning marital fidelity and maintaining close family bonds so as to engender the respectful treatment of parents by children (Exod 20:12, 17).

Community relationships also were emphasized from the outset where small families were to cooperate with their neighbours to keep the Passover (Exod 12:4). The same was the rule on the Sabbath when servants and strangers were welcome to participate in the day of rejoicing (Exod 20:10).

We will illustrate two elements on duties about conveying values. God's urgent call to the people of the world is to respond positively to His offer of salvation (Rev 14:6, 7). This calls for clear thinking. If we choose to fill our minds with violence and unkind speech and behaviour, we are being conditioned to react to others in a manner that reflects our mental diet. Antisocial behaviour is taught by the mass media (television, heavy metal music, music videos, etc). How can the multiple murders witnessed and other acts of violence fail to exert an influence? Even very young children are being conditioned to believe that it is 'normal' to act in unkind and unfaithful ways. Besides the measurable and observable effects of such a poor mental diet, those who spend long hours entertained by the mass media experience difficulties with sleep and obesity. Those with vested interests in the products that saturate the modern media markets will argue against them having adverse effects on human behaviour, but virtually no one else will join this chorus.

Informed sociologists advise us to offer toys, videos and music to the young that promote non-aggressive themes. This means that guns, tanks, similar toys, violent videos, and loud rebellious music promoting aggressive encounters should be struck off the shopping list. It is a truism that what the mind dwells on will determine what the individual will be like. If children are taught cooperative activities and given toys that promote this, there will be a good take up of information and helpful, cooperative behaviour will be the outcome, as demonstrated in the former Soviet Union. This good advice was anticipated by the apostle Paul who said: "whatever is true, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil 4:8, RSV; cf. Ps 101:3).

Prosocial behavior is the second aspect that will be highlighted. The roots of such behaviour are sown early – in the toddler phase of development. Less compassionate toddlers have mothers who are more prone to deliver physical restraint or punishment and restrict behaviour without explanation. Explaining the connection between acts and their effects on others is important in the early training of children. The behaviour acquired during childhood appears to be fairly stable. As children age, they also become more discriminating and analyze the reasons for a person's misfortune before they offer help. There is a strong

relationship between the development of prosocial behaviour in children and warm, loving parents who principally discipline by explanation followed by non-punitive measures. This also represents biblical advice (Eph 6:4; 1 Sam 1:20-23, 28; 2:18-20, 26). The crucible in which prosocial behavior is synthesized is the family and the interacting society in its totality.

Spiritual domain. The home is the place where moral and ethically sound principles are taught by example and word from the dawn of understanding. The success of this enterprise will depend on the creation of a warm, supportive environment, with boundaries erected for acceptable behavior supported by explanations rooted in a biblical base. This is part of the supportive framework we imagine led Paul to make affirmative comments to Timothy (2 Tim 1:5).

God's instruction, about keeping the principles He delivered to the Israelites ever before the children and youth (Deut 18:23), should not be thought of in terms reminiscent of practices sometimes feature as occurring in a madrasa. Reference to binding God's instruction on the hands and putting them as frontlets (ornaments) on the forehead (phylacteries or tefillin—v. 18) reminds readers of the practices of male Orthodox Jews. This practice is far removed from the intent of the instruction (cf. Matt 6:6; 23:5). The emphasis is on an attitude of conviction and dedication coming from a person surrendered and dedicated to fulfilling God's will (Deut 11:15, 18). This is conveyed by in the following rendition: "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds" (NIV). Indeed, this represents the essence of God's will as emphasized in the previous chapter (10:12-21) and as reaffirmed by Christ in His famous words about the most important commandment in the law (Matt 22:35-39; cf. 1 Pet 3:3, 4).

The focus in these passages is on the absolute necessity of a personal, vibrant and committed relationship with God as the basis for successful parent-hood. This will be reflected in a commitment to worship morning and evening (Deut 6:7), a point emphasized by the regular evening and morning sacrifices introduced by God with the sanctuary system (Exod 29:38, 39). Such services were meant to focus the mind of all on the continual availability of God's grace and the necessity for daily conversion and the expression of joy and gratitude at God's abundant mercy and love.

A most sobering discovery for parents is that their children, even a young age, show a tendency towards unacceptable behavior. Our moral natures are flawed on account of Adam's sin (Mark 7:21; Rom 5:7, 12; Eph 2:3), even though his guilt is not inherited, every human being soon acquires guilt through poor choices and acts (Jer 17:9; Rom 11:32). The concept of the parent standing in the place of God until full intelligence is developed is the task they are challenged to patiently explain.

The nature of sin is, at its very base, rebellion against God (Isa. 1:2, 4; Hos 7:13; Knight, 1992). This defining characteristic is something that parents must first accept and then explain to their children. Every unloving act involves a choice to disregard God's ideals (Ps. 51:4; Matt. 15:18). The remedy is to seek forgiveness and transformation of unacceptable attitudes so that unreserved commitment is made to God. When this is done, reconciliation has occurred (Acts 2:38; Rom 5:1, 2, 9-11; 12:1, 2). The exercise of faith in the merits of Christ is central to this undertaking (Rom 1:16, 17; 3:24-26). His example is then to be followed throughout the developing Christian experience (John 13:15; 1 Thess 1:6; 1 Pet 2:21) involving wholehearted commitment and reliance on God by faith (1 John 2:4-6; 5:4; Rev 3:21). This story of salvation must be gently explained and modelled to children.

After all, "The harvest of life is character." Character is demonstrated through attitudes and acts. Character traits are formed as acts are repeated. Faithfulness in little things strengthens the character for making choices when the tougher tests come (Luke 16:10). Actions are to spring from principle, with an eye to the glory of God (Acts 5:29; 1 Cor 10:31). The task before parents, which starts at a very early age, is to impress on their offspring the value of formatting good habits, both for success in this life and the life to come.

Spiritual growth also involves meeting together with fellow believers and is one of the good habits recommended by the apostle Paul (Heb 10:25). This is on account of the special blessing associated with such activities (Matt 18:20). The habit of thinking often of God's promises and assurances will engender a spirit of praise and thankfulness and lead to a joyful experience as though in the presence of Jesus. This is

the good advice given by David too (Ps 5:11, 12; 66). Keeping the coming of the Lord as a focus of thinking, and with it, the end of wickedness, is a special reason to be thankful (Ps 96:11-13), for the saved will dwell with the Lord forever (Rev 21:3). Failure to be joyful and serve the Lord with complete dedication will bring rather sad and disastrous consequences (Deut 28:45, 47). Such an attitude represents gross disrespect for and a callous attitude towards the sacrifice and abundant gifts given to humanity to rescue them from sin (Col 1:9-14).

Positive, grateful thoughts are strengthened as they are expressed. This is what has been termed operating by the “law of the mind.” The expression will not only increase our faith, but our joy, and keep our connection with heaven strong. Now verbalization of commitment strengthens an individual’s resolve to succeed for those coming from a number of compromised backgrounds, which speaks to the law of the mind concept spoken of by White.

There is a strong motivating force behind the Christian’s thinking that is a parent’s duty to transmit to their children. Human life was created by God and has direction and purpose. In the present world, the purpose is to be stewards of God’s creation, to share the knowledge of his saving love with others and to work productively in the society in which he/she find themselves. A Christian is motivated by the reality of God’s presence and His promises, the unbreakable pulling power of God’s love expressed in the life, death and continuing ministry of Christ and the promise of being with Him in the earth made new (Rom 4:21, 8:37-39; 2 Tim 1:12; Rev 21:1-4). When individuals understand that their lives have a high purpose, they are more willing to labour under varying circumstances until the great plan of God has been fulfilled in their lives. Part of this great plan is for them to be ambassadors of His grace (Matt 28:19, 20; 2 Cor 5:20).

One secret of success in the Christian life resides in prayer. Jesus’ disciples needed to be taught to pray (Luke 11:1). Children also need to be taught. Understanding of God’s word is also intimately connected with prayer. The advice given in the New Testament scriptures is to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). This does not mean that we are to pray all the time, but it does indicate a willingness to seek advice from God’s book of instructions in our everyday activities and to ask for help in times of special need. The meaning is illustrated in the experience of the cupbearer Nehemiah (Neh 2:4). He asked God for special wisdom as he stood before the ruler of the day asking for a special favour. Similarly, at the point of temptation children can be encouraged to ask God’s help knowing He will answer (1 Cor 10:13). Personal responsibility must be taught in religious matters.

Conclusions

Parenthood comes with many responsibilities and these begin before conception. The Bible provides guidelines on a variety of matters including choice of bloodlines to minimize genetic disorders. After the birth of children, parental responsibilities encompass the physical, mental, social and spiritual domains of human activity. The circumstances in which couples find themselves will determine their choices about their ability to provide support and guidance in all these areas, so as to provide an excellent base for their children to become children of the kingdom of God.

Responsible parenthood involves the engagement of the higher order mental abilities during the planning for and enjoyment of being a parent.

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The Imperative of Biblical Languages in Adventist Theological Education: Importance and Implications

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Abstract

This article revisited the foundation of why biblical languages are important in the theological and biblical education of the Seventh-day Adventist Church-operated colleges, universities, and seminaries belting the world. It unveiled the reasons why the study of biblical Hebrew and Greek are included in the theological curriculum as essential components of a rounded preparation of the pastor in handling the word of God. It was the intention of the author to review the scriptural and historical reflections of biblical scholars in the playing field of theological studies that includes hermeneutics, homiletics, exegesis, and biblical criticism. Biblical languages, as a field of discipline, promote a balance approach to the context of inspiration in the incarnational model revelation. The word of God in the language of man is a paradoxical truth that calls for understanding the role of biblical languages in God's revelation of Himself and His will to finite mortal beings. This article challenged all who handle the interpretation and proclamation of the Bible and its contents to consider it as a holy ground in the exploration of the human mind as the reader wrestles with the reality of God's transcendence and immanence.

Keywords: *Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, biblical languages, curriculum, Adventist, theological education, revelation, inspiration, biblical criticism, exegesis, hermeneutics, homiletics, translation and transliteration*

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: Genesis 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος. John 1:1

Seventh-day Adventists and its educational institutions hold the Bible as the sole authority in matters of doctrine and practice. This means that the entire Holy Scriptures both Old and New Testaments are foundational of their beliefs and practices. The Holy Scriptures refer to the inspired word of God given in the language of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Caviness (1935) wrote an article in the Ministry Magazine entitled, Shall I Study Greek and Hebrew? He makes this keen observation in relation to the need of pastoral and theological students to undergo rigid study of the biblical languages:

But for one who intends as a minister of the gospel to give his life to the exposition of the Bible, it is hard to understand why he should be satisfied to go on with no knowledge of the Bible in the original languages in which, in God's providence, His supreme revelation has been given (Caviness, 1935).

The reason that Adventist ministers and pastors should have a working knowledge of the original languages was also clarified:

The need of the Adventist minister to learn the biblical languages becomes clearer when one understands that there is no such thing as an exact correspondence of words in one language with words in another language. We say that we have the truth; but many times a minister, if he knows only the English, will quite unintentionally misrepresent the true meaning of a text, being misled by the fact that English words sometimes have more than one meaning, and the minister picks out that meaning which does not correspond with the original (Caviness, 1935).

Just at the turn of the 19th century, Robertson (1919), the noted Southern Baptist Greek scholar, in his *Grammar*, shared his conviction when he said, “No man can be a theologian who is not a philologist. He who is no grammarian is no divine.” In other words, he thought that learning and knowing Greek and Hebrew were absolutely necessary for anyone studying Scripture and theology.

The biggest reason given today for not learning Hebrew and Greek is that so many good English Bible translations are readily available to us. A similar problem existed in Luther’s day. He once asked, “Do you inquire what use there is in learning the languages? Luther gave a lengthy answer to his own question.

Without languages we could not have received the gospel. Languages are the scabbard that contains the sword of the Spirit; they are the casket which contains the priceless jewels of antique thought; they are the vessel that holds the wine; and as the gospel says, they are the baskets in which the loaves and fishes are kept to feed the multitude. If we neglect the literature we shall eventually lose the gospel ... No sooner did men cease to cultivate the languages than Christendom declined, even until it fell under the undisputed dominion of the pope. But no sooner was this torch relighted, than this papal owl fled with a shriek into congenial gloom ... In former times the fathers were frequently mistaken, because they were ignorant of the languages and in our days there are some who, like the Waldenses, do not think the languages of any use; but although their doctrine is good, they have often erred in the real meaning of the sacred text; they are without arms against error, and I fear much that their faith will not remain pure (Hugh & Hugh, 1966).

Three points were made clear in the answer of Luther. First, he knew that Scripture, specifically the Gospel, was communicated in the languages written by the Holy Spirit-inspired biblical authors. The Old Testament (OT) was written in Hebrew and some Aramaic, while the New Testament (NT) was penned in Greek. Luther was a professor of NT and engaged in an exegetical study of Romans in Greek when he “rediscovered” the Gospel that had long been lost—in particular, the doctrine of justification by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ. Someone once said, “Reading the Bible in translation is like kissing your bride through a veil” (Barrick & Busenitz, 2004).

Second, the reformer thought that just as languages were necessary in receiving the Gospel, so also they were essential in keeping the Gospel. He feared the Gospel would be lost if Hebrew and Greek were given short shrift.

Third, Luther knew that preachers in his day preached good doctrinal sermons; in other words, their theology and doctrine were good and even orthodox. However, he also knew that it was possible to be correct in one’s theology and doctrine but not really know the actual meaning of the texts on which the theology was based. Theology is imposed on the text when this happens. Unfortunately, this problem of “theologizing” the text is one current in our day just as it was in Luther’s time with the Waldenses. Luther thought that having the right theology but erring in determining the actual meaning of the biblical text left one “without arms,” i.e., defenseless to fight against errors that encroached upon our faith. He went on to say,

It is a sin and shame not to know our own book or to understand the speech and words of our God; it is a still greater sin and loss that we do not study languages, especially in these days when God is offering and giving us men and books and every facility and inducement to this study, and desires his Bible to be an open book. O’ how happy the dear fathers would have been if they had our opportunity to study the languages and come thus prepared to the Holy Scriptures! What great toil and effort it cost them to gather up a few crumbs, while we with half the labor— yes, almost without any labor at all—can acquire the whole loaf! O’ how their effort puts our indolence to shame (Barrick & Busenitz, 2004).

When contrasting “simple preachers” of Scripture who did not know or use the languages with preachers of God’s Word who were “versed” in the languages, Luther said, though the faith and the gospel may be proclaimed by simple preachers without the languages, such preaching is flat and tame, men grow

at last wearied and disgusted and falls to the ground. But when the preacher is versed in the languages, his discourse has freshness and force, the whole of Scripture is treated, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words (Barrick & Busenitz, 2004).

Six years after posting his Ninety-five Theses (1524), Martin Luther (1483-1546), father of the Protestant Reformation, charged his contemporaries:

Let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit [Eph. 6:17] is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored. . . . If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall . . . lose the gospel (Brandt, 1962).

Foundational Principles of Learning the Biblical Languages

Not everyone needs to know the biblical languages, even though all should seek to know God. First, the Lord has graciously made his Word translatable so that those “from every tribe and language and people and nation” may hear of and believe in the Savior. Ezra and the Levites helped a non-Hebrew speaking audience “understand the Law” (Neh. 8:7-8; cf. 13:24); the NT authors often preached from the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT; and people proclaimed the gospel at Pentecost in a way that “each one was hearing . . . in his own language” (Acts 2:6). As such, believers today can and should utilize the quality translations available to us in order to meet God and make Him known.

Second, grasping the fundamentals of Hebrew and Greek neither ensures correct interpretation of Scripture nor removes all interpretive challenges. It does not automatically make one a good exegete of texts or an articulate, winsome proclaimer of God’s truth to a needy world. Linguistic skill also does not necessarily result in deeper levels of holiness or in greater knowledge of God. Why then do we need some in the Church who can skillfully use the biblical languages?

Jason DeRouchie (2012), an associate professor of OT at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis has written an article entitled, *The Profit of Employing the Biblical Languages: Scriptural and Historical Reflections*. He has satisfactorily answered the abovementioned question. Here is the synthesis of his point of view.

First, using the biblical languages exalts Jesus by affirming God’s wisdom in giving the people His Word in a book. Second, using the biblical languages gives them greater certainty that they have grasped the meaning of God’s Book. Third, using the biblical languages can assist in developing Christian maturity that validates the people’s witness in the world. Finally, using the biblical languages enables a fresh and bold expression and defense of the truth in preaching and teaching.

The first reason relates to the nature and foundational place of God’s Word, and the last three grow out of the pattern of Ezra’s resolve, which resulted in a ministry blessed by God: study the Word → practice the Word → teach the Word. “The good hand of his God was on him, for Ezra set his heart to study and to practice the Torah of Yahweh and to teach both statute and rule in Israel” (Ezra 7:9c-10, author’s translation; cf. 8:22) (DeRouchie, 2007). Following are the four major principles and their application to the present situation in the Adventist theological education.

Biblical Languages Exalts Jesus by Affirming God’s Wisdom in Giving Christians His Word in a Book

Adventists affirm that the God that the Christians serve and worship always acts to preserve and display His glory. God chooses to disclose Himself and His will through a written Word, given in Hebrew (and Aramaic) and Greek. In the words of Martin Luther (Brandt, 1962), “Although the gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages, was spread abroad by that means, and must be preserved by the same means.” Luther continues to assert, “If God did not despise [Hebrew and Greek] but chose them above all others for his word, then we too ought to honor them above all others” (Brandt, 1962). Similarly, John Owen (1616-1683), the leading Puritan of the seventeenth century, correctly noted in 1678 that “the words of the Scripture being given thus immediately

from God, every apex, tittle or iota in the whole is considerable, as that which is an effect of divine wisdom, and therefore filled with sacred truth, according to their place and measure” (Owen, 1967).

In His wisdom and for the benefit of every generation of humankind, God chose to preserve and guard in a book his authoritative, clear, necessary, and sufficient Word (Grudem, 1994). Initially, God uniquely entrusted His written revelation to the Jews in the Hebrew OT (Ps 147:19-20; Rom 3:2). He spoke His Word through the prophets (Deut. 18:18; Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet 1:21), who in turn wrote down those words in the language of the people, thus securing a lasting guide and witness (Deut. 31:24-26; Isa 30:8; Dan 9:11). This written, canonical text was then to be copied (Deut. 17:18; Josh 8:32), studied and meditated on (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:3; Neh. 8:13), and taught by faithful followers from generation to generation, whether priests, prophets, princes, parents, or the like (Lev 10:11; Deut. 6:7; 17:18-20; 18:18; 31:11; Ps 78:5). Then, in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), God spoke again, now through Jesus, His eternal Word (John 1:1; Heb. 1:1), who called His disciples to obey His teachings (Matt 28:20). He also promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would recall for them all He taught (John 14:26; 16:12-13). Then these apostles, empowered by the Spirit of Christ in them, spread abroad the teaching of Jesus through the NT (Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 3).

Biblical Languages Give Christians Greater Certainty That They Have Grasped the Meaning of God’s Book

This second reason for the importance of Hebrew and Greek relates to the study of Scripture. Knowing the original languages helps one observe more accurately and thoroughly, understand more clearly, evaluate more fairly, and interpret more confidently the inspired details of the biblical text.

The Bible is clear that it was given to the simple, not just the scholar. It is designed to make “wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7), to impart “understanding to the simple” (119:130), and to be easily taught to children (Deut. 6:6-7; Ps. 78:5-8).

These truths, however, do not mitigate either the sustained call to careful, God-reliant study or the fact that those without the languages still need the scholar to render the biblical text in an understandable way. Speaking into a context where people were abusing the gift of tongues and not appreciating the clear prophetic word, Paul asserts, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). He then later charges the Corinthians, “Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature” (14:20). Similarly, Paul tells Timothy, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. . . . Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:7, 15). These texts together stress that God-dependent, rigorous thought, directed toward God’s Book, is the call of every minister.

Peter’s comment elsewhere regarding Paul’s writings clarifies the deadly result of careless biblical interpretation: “There are some things in [Paul’s letters] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Pet 3:16). Destruction comes to those who mishandle God’s Word. Five summary points can be drawn from these passages:

Every Christian should seek to think maturely, which means yearning for the clear Word of God, rightly understanding what is good, and being innocent to what is evil (1 Cor. 14:20). Ignorant and unstable people misappropriate God’s Word, but those who are neither ignorant nor unstable can rightly understand it (2 Pet. 3:16). The answer to ignorance and instability and the means to right understanding in everything is God-dependent thinking over his revealed Word, given through his prophets (2 Tim. 2:7). Without God’s Spirit guiding the human mind and altering the human heart, we will never fully grasp the message of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14). An interpreter is shameless before God and handles the Word rightly only when God approves of the interpretation (i.e., when we rightly grasp God’s original intention through the biblical author; 2 Tim. 2:15); this process takes self-discipline (“do your best”) and is a central element in word-based vocational ministry (“a worker”).

Meaning of Scripture

How can we rightly grasp the meaning of Scripture, if not through original language exegesis? J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), during the first presidential convocation address of Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929, clearly stated,

If you are to tell what the Bible does say, you must be able to read the Bible for yourself. And you cannot read the Bible for yourself unless you know the languages in which it was written. . . . In his mysterious wisdom [God] gave [his Word] to us in Hebrew and in Greek. Hence if we want to know the Scriptures, to the study of Greek and Hebrew we must go (Machen, 2004).

Many others before Machen held similar convictions. For example, in his inaugural address to his students at Wittenberg in 1518, Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), German reformer and collaborator with Martin Luther, asserts, “Only if we have clearly understood the language will we clearly understand the content. . . . If we put our minds to the [Hebrew and Greek] sources, we will begin to understand Christ rightly” (Melanchthon, 1987). Accordingly, John Calvin (1509-1564), the great French theologian and influential leader of the Protestant Reformation from Geneva, emphasizes that attempting to fully grasp the meaning of Scripture without the original languages is “to make all revere a Scripture hidden in darkness like the mysteries of Ceres, and let none presume to aspire to the understanding of it” (Calvin, 1983). Finally, writing in 1678, John Owen states, “In the interpretation of the mind of any one, it is necessary that the words he speaks or writes be rightly understood; and this we cannot do immediately unless we understand the language wherein he speaks, as also the idiotisms of that language, with the common use and intention of its phraseology and expression” (Owen, 1967).

The call for original language exegesis does not mean translations ineffectively communicate God’s Word. Indeed, translations are “God’s Word” in so far as they accurately align with the Hebrew or Greek original (Robertson, 1977). However, the presence of numerous quality translations only heightens the need for some people in every generation who can evaluate these versions in light of their source.

Gaining More Confidence

There are certain levels of thinking, wrestling, and assurance that are possible only when one exegetes the original language. Robertson (1863-1934), Professor of NT at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, clarifies part of this point when he notes that “the minute study called for by the Greek opens up unexpected treasures that surprise and delight the soul” (Robertson, 1977). The biblical languages are the very means by which God gave us his Word, and using them forces interpreters to ask questions that would have gone un-raised, to observe details that would have been missed, to evaluate arguments in a way otherwise impossible, and to grasp more clearly and confidently the intended message of the biblical authors.

Interpretive Challenges

At least two serious interpretive challenges face the minister who is unable to use the biblical languages. The first is captured by Machen, who rightly observes that a student without Hebrew and Greek “cannot deal with all the problems [of interpretation] at first hand, but in a thousand important questions is at the mercy of the judgment of others” (Machen, 2004). With respect to secondary resources for study, this means that students without skill in the languages must either use what Machen figuratively calls “works that are written . . . in words of one syllable,” or they must borrow what others say without accurate comprehension or fair evaluation (Brandt, 1962).

With respect to the biblical text, interpretations done apart from Hebrew and Greek are always dependent on someone else’s translation. Yet how is one to evaluate whether a given translation is justified? And how is one to respond when faced with great diversity in the versions themselves, as in the various renderings of the Shema in Deut. 6:4, the “without a vision” text in Prov. 29:18, or of the virgin daughter versus virgin fiancé issue in 1 Cor. 7:36-38.

Regarding “simple preachers,” who approach the interpretive process without the languages, Luther states, “Even though what they said about a subject at times was perfectly true, they were never sure whether it really was present there in the passage where by their interpretation they thought to find it” (Brandt, 1962). More than a millennium before, in 397, St. Augustine (354-430), Latin Church Father and Bishop of Hippo, similarly affirmed, “The literal translation cannot be ascertained without reference to the text in the original tongue” (Augustine, 1952).

The second challenge faced by those without Hebrew and Greek is that no two languages bear one-to-one correspondence, so even the best translations lose something in their renderings. In the words of Robertson, “The freshness of the strawberry cannot be preserved in any extract” (Robertson, 1977). Owen puts it this way:

There is in the originals of the Scripture a peculiar emphasis of words and expressions, and in them an especial energy, to intimate and insinuate the sense of the Holy Ghost unto the minds of men, which cannot be traduced into other languages by translations, so as to obtain the same power and efficacy. . . . It is [therefore] of singular advantage, in the interpretation of the Scripture, that a man be well acquainted with the original languages, and be able to examine the use and signification of words, phrases, and expressions as they are applied and declared in other authors (Owen, 1967).

Furthermore, linguistic features like discourse markers, verb choice and placement, and connection are often difficult to fully convey cross-linguistically, so those working only with a translation are at a loss in capturing all that the original authors intended, especially the flow of thought. As Machen says, “Our student without Greek cannot acquaint himself with the form as well as the content of the New Testament books” (Machen, 2004). Or as Robertson observes, even when many translations are examined, “there will remain a large and rich untranslatable element that the preacher ought to know” (Robertson, 1977). For this, Hebrew and Greek alone can help.

Call to Be Students of God’s Book

Luther is correct that, although without knowledge of Hebrew and Greek “it is impossible to avoid constant stumbling . . . there are plenty of problems to work out even when one is well versed in the languages” (Brandt, 1962). Nevertheless, as Owen states, through the biblical languages “a hindrance is removed” and “occasions of manifold mistakes are taken away, and the cabinet is as it were unlocked wherein the jewel of truth lies hid, which with a lawful diligent search may be found” (Owen, 1967). It is in this context it is asserted that using the biblical languages enables one to observe more accurately and thoroughly, understand more clearly, evaluate more fairly, and interpret more confidently the inspired details of the biblical text.

Biblical Languages Can Assist in Developing Christian Maturity That Validates the Christians’ Witness in the World

Scripture is clear that a true encounter with God’s Word will alter the way people live, shaping servants instead of kings and nurturing Christ-exalting humility rather than pride. Bible study should overflow in deeper levels of radical surrender to the Lord and His ways. In both the OT and NT, the pattern for nurturing sustained life with God is this: teaching or reading the Word leads to hearing the Word, which gives rise to learning to fear God, which overflows in obeying the Word (Deut. 31:11-13; cf. 6:1-2; 17:19-20; John 5:25; 6:45). One is self-deceived and will be cursed if he claims to be a man of the Word yet fails to live it out (Matt 23:2-3, 23, 25-27; Jas 1:22). However, those who hear and act will be blessed (Jas 1:23; cf. Rom 2:13), and others will “see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Having addressed how exegeting the biblical text in the original languages aids study, the benefits of Hebrew and Greek for one’s walk with God and witness in the world follow. Using the biblical languages helps clarify what feelings God wants Christians to have and what actions He wants them to take. The

languages help foster a depth of character, commitment, conviction, and satisfaction in life and ministry that substantiates our Christian testimony in the world.

A Means for Knowing God and His Ways

In 1918, speaking out against the secularization of Christian education, J. Gresham Machen asserted, "In many colleges, the study of Greek is almost abandoned. . . . The real trouble with the modern exaltation of 'practical' studies at the expense of the humanities is that it is based upon a vicious conception of the whole purpose of education. The modern conception of the purpose of education is merely intended to enable a man to live, but not to give him those things that make life worth living (Machen, 2004).

Mining God's Word is the means to the most grounded, authentic, satisfied, and God-glorifying life. Through Scripture "you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

One cannot help but see, therefore, the intimate link between the biblical languages and our daily lives. If the Word is the means to knowing God and living for him and if the biblical languages are the very means by which God communicated his Word, then knowing Hebrew and Greek can directly serve one's desire for God and display of God in daily life. Exegeting Scripture through the original languages assists in shaping proper feelings toward God's truth and in applying this truth in wise and helpful ways.

Adventists like the leaders of the Protestant Reformation always viewed the principle of sola Scriptura to require not only serious biblical scholarship but also "the practice of godliness": "Piety was the first prerequisite, followed by biblical and theological scholarship" (Harman, 1991). Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), who initiated the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland, helpfully assesses the importance of biblical languages in the growth of Christians:

Once a young man is instructed in the solid virtue which is formed by faith, it follows that he will regulate himself and richly adorn himself from within: for only he whose whole life is ordered finds it easy to give help and counsel to others.

But a man cannot rightly order his own soul unless he exercises himself day and night in the Word of God. He can do that most readily if he is well versed in such languages as Hebrew and Greek, for a right understanding of the OT is difficult without the one, and a right understanding of the New is equally difficult without the other. . . .

But in respect of [Hebrew and] Greek as well as Latin we should take care to garrison our souls with innocence and faith, for in these tongues there are many things which we learn only to our hurt: wantonness, ambition, violence, cunning, vain philosophy and the like. But the soul . . . can steer safely past all these if it is only forewarned, that is, if at the first sound of the voices it pays heed to the warning: Hear this in order to shun and not to receive. . . .

If a man would penetrate to the heavenly wisdom, with which no earthly wisdom ought rightly to be considered, let alone compared, it is with such arms [namely, the languages] that he must be equipped. And even then he must still approach with a humble and thirsting spirit (Zwingli, 1953).

For biblical interpreters today, all of whom are non-native speakers of ancient Hebrew and Greek, the benefits of the languages for holy living are not limited to the ways they help us encounter God through his Word. Indeed, the arduous task itself of learning, keeping, and using the languages provides many opportunities for growth in character, discipline, boldness, and joy. Machen rightly observes that the languages are "the most laborious part" of biblical studies (Machen, 2004). But he would have also agreed with Robertson, who says, "There is no sphere of knowledge where one is repaid more quickly for all the toil expended" (Robertson, 1977).

Our God, who is passionate for his own glory and our joy, calls people whose primary language is not Hebrew or Greek to handle his Word with care. The countless hours of memorizing, parsing, diagramming, and tracing the logical flow of thought are designed not only to help us grasp the biblical message but also

to conform ourselves to it. “Grammar is a means of grace” in more than one way (Robertson, 1977) and at times God makes it difficult for us to interpret his Word correctly in order to fight our laziness and to develop character. When tempted to give up on the languages due to their taxing nature, may students of God’s Book remember that the Lord is graciously calling them to greater God-dependence and less self-reliance, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

Biblical Languages Enables a Fresh and Bold Expression and Defense of the Truth in Preaching and Teaching

In 1909, ministering amid the rising waves of Protestant liberalism, Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921), Professor of Theology at Princeton Seminary and J. Gresham Machen’s senior faculty member and mentor, claimed, “A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training necessary for it” (Warfield, 2001). If ministers are to be merely overseers of religious programs, agents designed to advance modern culture, or inspirational speakers, then certainly Hebrew and Greek are unnecessary. But if ministers are called to be specialists in the Word and winsome advocates for the truth, everything changes. As Warfield says,

If the minister is the mouth-piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what his will for his people [is]--then, the whole aspect of things is changed. Then, it is the prime duty of the minister to know his message; to know the instructions which have been committed to him for the people, and to know them thoroughly; to be prepared to declare them with confidence and with exactness, to commend them with wisdom, and to urge them with force and defend them with skill, and to build men up by means of them into a true knowledge of God and of his will, which will be unassailable in the face of the fiercest assault. No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs. . . . For such a ministry . . . nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God’s hand and in the fullness of meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought (Warfield, 2001).

Nine years later, in 1918, it was stressed that a preacher is true to his calling only if he succeeds “in reproducing and applying the message of the Word of God” (Machen, 2004). That is, the Bible “is not merely one of the sources of the preacher’s inspiration, but the very sum and substance of what he has to say. But if so, then whatever else the preacher need not know, he must know the Bible; he must know it at first hand, and be able to interpret it and defend it.”⁴⁷ And how can this best be done, if not through original language exegesis?

Having considered the uniqueness and importance of God’s Book, the priority of studying God’s Book, and the necessity of applying God’s Book, this section addresses the responsibility of teaching God’s Book. My intent is to show some ways that knowing the biblical languages (1) provides a sustained freshness, a warranted boldness, and an articulated, sure, and helpful witness to the truth and (2) equips one to defend the gospel and hold others accountable in ways otherwise impossible.

Personal Discovery and Passionate Proclamation

Saturated study of Scripture through the languages provides sustained opportunity for new discovery, freshness, and insight, all of which enhance one’s teaching. The goal in instruction is not to be original in one’s message but to be individual in one’s grasp of truth and in the presentation of the message. In A. T. Robertson’s words, through wrestling with the Hebrew and Greek Bible, “the originality that one

will thus have is the joy of reality, the sense of direct contact, of personal insight, of surprise and wonder as one stumbles unexpectedly upon the richest pearls of truth kept for him through all ages” (Robertson, 1977). Centuries earlier, Martin Luther similarly wrote, “Where the preacher is versed in the languages, there is a freshness and vigor in his preaching, Scripture is treated in its entirety, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and illustrations” (Brandt, 1962).

The Minister as a Guide

It is a devastating reality that local churches today often treat ministers more as general managers of congregational affairs than as specialists called to know and teach God’s Book. Thus critical questions about the Bible are left to theological professors and the like, while congregational leaders stand ill-equipped to confront the biggest problems facing the world with the only answer that can satisfy. However, as Machen rightly observes,

Especially while doubt remains in the world as to the great central question [of the truthfulness and beauty of the gospel], who more properly than the ministers should engage in the work of resolving such doubt--by intellectual instruction even more than by argument? The work cannot be turned over to a few professors whose work is of interest only to themselves, but must be undertaken energetically by spiritually minded men through the church. But obviously, this work can be undertaken to best advantage only by those who have an important prerequisite for the study in a knowledge of the original languages upon which a large part of the discussion is based (Machen, 2004).

In a world filled with competing truth claims, ministers are called to guide their flocks in biblical truth. Certainly the biblical languages can assist toward this end.

Aid for Defending Biblical Truth

The call of every Bible expositor is to communicate “as one who speaks oracles of God” (1 Pet 4:11). Teachers of God’s Book “will be judged with greater strictness” (Jas 3:1; cf. 2 Pet 2:1, 3), and condemnation will fall on all who add to or take away from God’s words (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Josh 1:7; Prov. 30:6; Rev 22:18-19).

Because life and death are at stake when the Word is proclaimed, Paul tells Titus that the elder in God’s Church “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Such an effort is best done with the biblical languages. As Luther observes,

When it comes to interpreting Scripture, and working with it on your own, and disputing with those who cite it incorrectly, [one unskilled in Hebrew and Greek] is unequal to the task; that cannot be done without languages. Now there must always be such prophets in the Christian church who can dig into Scripture, expound it, and carry on disputations. A saintly life and right doctrine are not enough. Hence, languages are absolutely and altogether necessary in the Christian church (Brandt, 1962).

One contemporary example of the benefits of knowing the languages in order to preserve the gospel is seen in the way Christian apologists skilled in the languages are better equipped to defend the doctrine of Christ’s deity when confronting Jehovah’s Witnesses. A careful walk through the Greek NT discloses the numerous heretical errors of the New World Translation.

Writing in response to the Council of Trent (April 8, 1546), where the Roman Catholics asserted that the Latin Vulgate translation alone was the only authentic text of Scripture, John Calvin avows, “By one article they have obtained the means of proving what they please out of Scripture, and escaping from every passage that might be urged against them” (Calvin, 1983). By turning from the biblical languages, we “shut our eyes to the light that we spontaneously may go astray” (Calvin, 1983).

In this regard, Luther stresses, All teachings must be judged. For this a knowledge of the language is needful above all else. The preacher or teacher can expound the Bible from beginning to end as he pleases, accurately or inaccurately, if there is no one there to judge whether he is doing it right or wrong. But in order to judge, one must have a knowledge of the languages; it cannot be done any other way (Brandt, 1962).

Luther expresses constant frustration at “simple preachers,” unskilled in the biblical languages, who continually mishandle God’s Word:

When men attempt to defend the faith with such uncertain arguments and mistaken proof texts, are not Christians put to shame and made a laughingstock in the eyes of adversaries who know the language? The adversaries only become more stiff-necked in their error and have an excellent pretext for regarding our faith as a mere human delusion. When our faith is thus held up to ridicule, where does the fault lie? It lies in the ignorance of the languages; and there is no other way out than to learn the languages. . . . [Those without Hebrew and Greek] often employ uncertain, indefensible, and inappropriate expressions. They grope their way like a blind man along the wall, frequently missing the sense of the text and twisting it to suit their fancy (Brandt, 1962).

Call to Preach the Word

Machen asserts that what was needed in his day were not “theological pacifists who avoid controversy, but . . . earnest contenders for the faith” (Machen, 2004). The same is true at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The biblical languages sharpen preaching to make it as pointed, accurate, and penetrating as possible. Preaching without original language exegesis is like wielding a blunt sword. May our God build an army of men and women in the next generation who can boldly articulate and defend the truth of the gospel because of their humble grounding in Hebrew and Greek.

Implications of the Importance of Biblical Languages

There are practical benefits of learning the biblical languages. The following are insights gleaned from the experiences of the heroes of the faith through the history of biblical interpretation and preaching: (a) Preachers will be able to determine and critique whether an English translation is an accurate one; (b) they will see things in Hebrew and Greek that they just cannot see in an English Bible; Scripture truly comes to life when studied in the original; (c) they will become better preachers and teachers of God’s Word because they are able to interpret it accurately; consequently, with Spirit-filled living, their sermons will be full of conviction and authority; (d) a whole new world of resources will open up to them because now they will be able to read and understand a variety of books that they have not been able to use beforehand; and (e) they will now be a first-handers and no longer have to mimic others when they preach. The following are implications on the importance of biblical languages in the theological training of young men and women.

First, Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic are the only languages that God chose to communicate His inspired word. The orthodox doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture has always been restricted to the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts as penned by the Biblical writers (or their scribes), not to copies or translations of these documents. Reading the original Biblical languages is like hearing the voice in person, as opposed to listening through a distorted, cracking and hissing AM radio station.

Second, our primary concern must be with the grammar of the original language, not the English translation, and for this we need to know the original biblical language. A text simply cannot mean what the grammar of that text does not support.

Third, knowing biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek unveils the interpretive options of a given text—and assists in properly adjudicating among them. In the Greek language the genitive case alone has over thirty different grammatical functions, of which translators must choose only one in any given occurrence; English readers frequently have little clue what possibilities the translators rejected.

Fourth, knowing Biblical Hebrew and Greek gives the interpreter useable access to invaluable exegetical tools. Certain passages of Scripture have multiple possibilities for meaning. Some translations footnote the grammatical options, but many do not. When, say the King James Version differs from the New International Version, how will you determine which of them gives the best sense. For this, readers need knowledge of the Biblical languages and access to grammars, lexica, and scholarly commentaries that deal directly with the original text, little of which will make any sense to those unschooled in Biblical languages.

Fifth, reading the text in the original Biblical languages develops and reinforces a careful, detailed hermeneutical approach. Having to establish the precise use of a case or mood or voice may force the interpreter to consider all the various possibilities of meaning inherent in the language of the text. When it comes to hermeneutics, attention to detail often brings a huge exegetical dividend from this investment.

Sixth, reading the biblical text in the original Hebrew or Greek languages also identifies the authors' emphases. Here we think specifically of rhetorical features, such as alliteration, assonance, poetic structure, chiasm, marked/unmarked word order, and the like, most of which are completely lost in translation—but all of which are clearly discernable to those schooled in the Biblical languages.

Finally, learning the biblical languages is a crucial antidote to hermeneutical arrogance. Grappling with texts in their original Biblical language repeatedly calls our preconceived notions about the meaning of these texts to account; it checks unfounded certainty and preformed conclusions.

Congregations naturally put their trust in their spiritual leaders—and sometimes for very laudable reasons. But this does not obviate the danger of such a practice, and it certainly makes preachers and teachers of God's word all the more responsible for "cutting a smooth path for the Word of Truth" as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:15.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In the Hebrew, as in the Greek, the minister or pastor comes directly to that which the holy men of old wrote down and in the very words they wrote. Suppose it does take effort to understand what God has said to man in the very words in which it was given. The effort is well repaid. The Spirit of prophecy urges Christians to give not so much time to what men say about nature, but more time to the study of nature itself. Does not the same principle apply to the study of God's word? The Bible in the original is the final authority, not some version, no matter how well done.

Let each Adventist minister, as far as possible, qualify himself to go directly to that original, whenever necessary on any special point. It is still better if he can get so familiar with the Biblical languages as to read long connected passages understandingly, and get all the satisfaction of that direct contact. It is a poor missionary who, going to a foreign country, would willingly rest content to depend forever on an interpreter. What about the minister who refuses to exert himself to learn either the Greek or the Hebrew?

Writing to his contemporaries who were questioning the need for Christian theological education, Martin Luther avows,

Since it becomes Christians then to make good use of the Holy Scriptures as their one and only book and it is a sin and a shame not to know our own book or to understand the speech and words of our God, it is a still greater sin and loss that we do not study languages, especially in these days when God is offering and giving us men and books and every facility and inducement to this study, and desires his Bible to be an open book. O how happy the dear fathers would have been if they had had our opportunity to study the languages and come thus prepared to the Holy Scriptures! What great toil and effort it cost them to gather up a few crumbs, while we with half the labor--yes, almost without any labor at all--can acquire the whole loaf! O how their effort puts our indolence to shame! Yes, how sternly God will judge our lethargy and ingratitude! (1962)

For the Adventist pastor and minister who are charged to proclaim God's truth with accuracy and to preserve the gospel's purity with integrity, the biblical languages help in one's study, practice, and teaching of the Word. Properly using the languages opens doors of biblical discovery that would otherwise remain

locked and provides interpreters with accountability that they would not otherwise have. The minister who knows Hebrew and Greek will not only feed himself but will also be able to gain a level of biblical discernment that will allow him to respond in an informed way to new translations, new theological perspectives, and other changing trends in Church and culture. With the languages, the interpreter's observations can be more accurate and thorough, understanding clearer, evaluation more fair, feelings more aligned with truth, application more wise and helpful, and expression more compelling.

In light of the above discussion, the following action steps are recommended to readers of all vocational callings: First, seminary professors and administrators should endeavor to make exegeting the Word in the original languages the core of every curriculum that is designed to train vocational ministers of God's Book. Second, church shepherds and shepherds-in-training should seek to become God-dependent, rigorous thinkers who study, practice, and teach the Word--in that order! Third, local church leaders should give ministers who are called to preach and teach time to study, and help congregations see this as a priority. Fourth, young adult leaders and college professors should encourage those sensing a call to vocational ministry of the Word to become thoroughly equipped for the task. Fifth, every church member should pray to our glorious God for the preservation of the gospel, for our leaders, and for the churches and schools training them. Sixth, may God through his Word satisfy and sustain his Church for generations to come, and may He continue to raise up individuals in every generation who rightly and unashamedly handle the Word of truth for the purity of the gospel and the glory of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:15).

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