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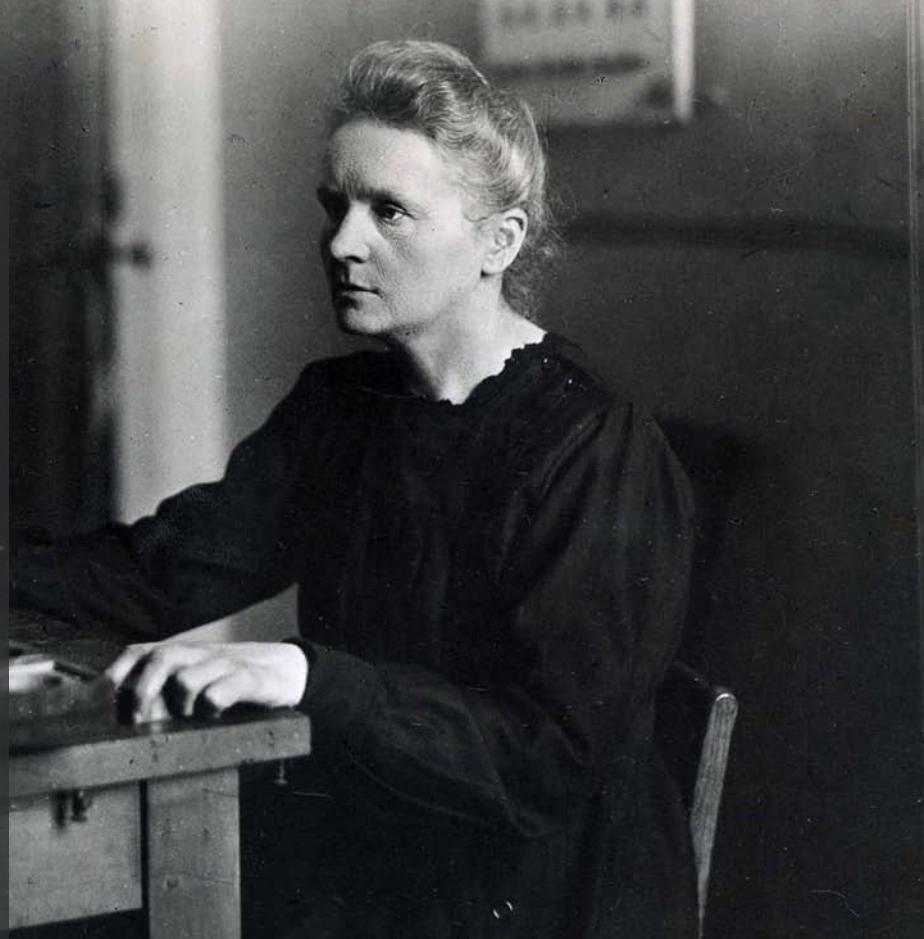
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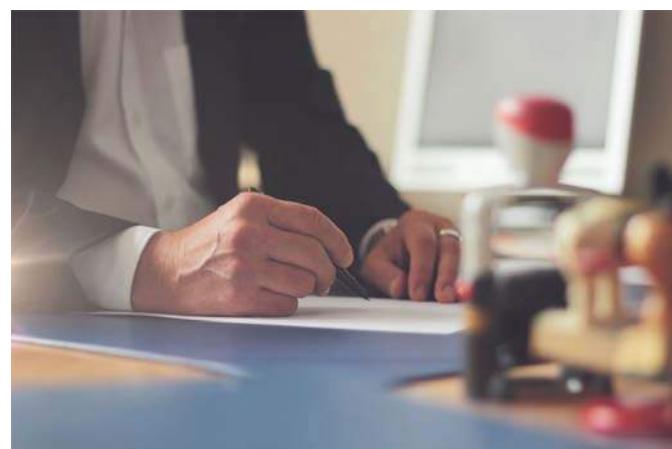
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Beyond Open Doors and Performative Allyship: A Subaltern Autoethnographic Account on 'White' Allyship in the Post-2020 BLM Protests Era

Dr. Fidele Mutwarasibo

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Pandemic brought to light the racial inequities in the United Kingdom through its disproportionate impact on racialised minority communities. The murder of George Floyd in the hands of people who should have been protecting him reinvigorated the Black Lives Matter (BLM) social movement in the United States of America (USA). Inspired by social media reports, BLM messages were appropriated and adopted in many countries across the world, including the United Kingdom (UK). The BLM protests in the UK, on the one hand, highlighted the racial inequalities in the UK and reminded the public of the UK's colonial history.

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Pandemic brought to light the racial inequities in the United Kingdom through its disproportionate impact on racialised minority communities. The murder of George Floyd in the hands of people who should have been protecting him reinvigorated the Black Lives Matter (BLM) social movement in the United States of America (USA). Inspired by social media reports, BLM messages were appropriated and adopted in many countries across the world, including the United Kingdom (UK). The BLM protests in the UK, on the one hand, highlighted the racial inequalities in the UK and on the other hand reminded the public of the UK's colonial history.

It is not surprising that BLM protests led corporate entities, foundations and churches in the UK to commission inquiries to research their possible connections to colonialism, slavery, and indentured labour. Many would later issue statements and commit to investing in initiatives aiming to address racial inequalities. These institutions stated that they were shifting from standing against racism to becoming antiracist. In effect, they were committing to becoming allies in promoting racial equity and addressing the structural challenges standing in the way of racial equity. Allyship is not a new concept; literature has covered allyship polarities ranging from performative to authentic/substantive allyships.

The paper is informed by The Open University's Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership's research on collaboration and engagement between the leadership of racialised minority networks and service providers in promoting racial equity. The empirical research is complemented by my lived experience as a racialised minority leader engaged in social and political practices promoting racial equity. This autoethnographic paper seeks to explore whether, four years after George Floyd's murder, approaches to allyship have changed to embody the commitment to antiracist practices on the one hand and a move away from tokenism and promoting emancipatory allyship.

I. INTRODUCTION

Two storms hit the United Kingdom (UK) in 2020. They brought to the fore debates on racial inequalities. COVID-19 pandemic and BLM protests raised questions on the representation of racialised minorities and the behaviours of allies in the promotion of racial equity and social cohesion. The disparities in health outcomes for racialised minorities during the early part of the pandemic led public institutions such as the National Health Service (NHS) and local councils to exert extra efforts in their engagements with racialised minority leaders. Although I had not laid any claim to leadership, at the time, of any racialised minority networks, I found myself in demand. I served as a Milton Keynes Council's COVID-19 champion and a member of an ad-hoc COVID-19 committee set up by NHS and Milton

Keynes Council. While I was questioning my positionality on these committees, questions were emerging about tensions between the existing pragmatic racialised minority networks' leadership and the emerging BLM protests' leadership prepared to engage in direct action to underscore their frustrations with the lukewarm commitment to racial equity by many stakeholders.

The appropriation of BLM protests' messages in the UK and beyond was not only underpinned by the inhumanities surrounding George Floyd's death in the United States of America (USA); appalling as the death was, the catalyst for BLM protests in the UK was the ongoing frustrations with the response to call for concerted action in addressing racial inequalities. The connection of racial inequalities with racism and colonialism meant that the UK was a historic stakeholder in what was happening in the USA. It is not surprising that businesses, charities and churches, among other organisations, engaged in reviewing their records to ascertain if they had any connection with slavery, indentured labour and colonialism. The paper will focus on the reviews undertaken by the Church of England and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on their links to slavery.

The COVID-19 pandemic and BLM protests have led organisations across the UK to change their approach from non-racist to antiracist and to move towards becoming more inclusive. However, the role of "White" allies in building antiracist institutions and, hence, society, is widely acknowledged, in saying that most of the literature on allyship focuses on two polarities. On the one hand, the literature covers performative allyship expressed through symbolic gestures but lacking in substance, and on the other hand, substantive/authentic allyship expressed through an ongoing commitment to racial equity and appreciation of the allies' positionality and privilege. One of the blind spots in allyship literature is who assesses allyship. There is a case for giving more prominence to the beneficiaries of allyship when judging the behaviours of allies. There is also a case for allies stepping back and

letting the beneficiaries engage more prominently in promoting racial equity.

In addition to my social practices as a racialised minority leader, I have, over the last four years, researched with Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership (CVSL) colleagues the leadership of racialised minority networks. The research has focused on racialised minority networks' leaders' engagements and collaboration with public service providers. In addition to the standard qualitative research tools – semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observation, I have been engaging in knowledge exchange activities in the UK and beyond. I have also been working with an illustrator to visually capture my experience with allyship. Through this autoethnographic ("a self-narrative that places the self within a social context" - Reed-Danahay 1997:9) paper, I intend to respond to three crucial questions:

- Has "White" allyship changed to underscore the institutions' move to become antiracist and intentionally inclusive?
- Should the meaning of allyship be stretched and expanded beyond the polarities of performative and substantive/authentic allyships?
- How could allyship empower racialised minorities to become more engaged in shaping 'White' allies' emerging institutional antiracist practices?

II. CONTEXT AND POSITIONALITY

The year 2020 will feature in history books. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic will be prominent in the story of 2020. In the UK, the story will include the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on racialised minorities. According to the Office of National Statistics, "deaths involving the coronavirus ... by ethnicity for England and Wales ... among some ethnic groups [were] significantly higher than that of those of White ethnicity ... Black males [were] 4.2 times more likely to die from a COVID-19-related death, and Black females [were] 4.3 times more likely than [their] White [counterparts] ... People of Bangladeshi and Pakistani, Indian, and mixed ethnicities ... had a statistically significant raised

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risk of death involving COVID-19" (ONS 2020). Many explanations of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racialised minorities were suggested, including "social and economic inequalities, racism, discrimination and stigma, occupational risk, inequalities in the prevalence of … obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and asthma" (Tapper 2020). Four years after the initial response to COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns, there is an emerging consensus that the "COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the depth of social and racial inequalities in the United Kingdom" (Balakumar *et al.* 2020).

Second, the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, triggered global BLM protests. Although George Floyd's murder took place in the USA, the message underpinning the BLM protests resonated with people miles away. In the United Kingdom, the BLM protests "brought inequalities and institutional bias to the forefront of public consciousness" (Balakumar *et al.* 2020). Across the UK, in "260 towns and cities, thousands defied lockdown to join largest anti-racism rallies since slavery era" (Mohdin et al. 2020). Number wise, "more than 210,000 people … attended demonstrations around the country, including 10,000 protesters in Brighton, 4,000 in Birmingham, and 3,000 in Newcastle" (Mohdin et al. 2020). The profound question is, what led thousands of people to take to the streets in the UK and go as far as pulling down or threatening to pull down statues and monuments, such as the case of the pulling down of the enslaver Edward Colston statue in Bristol on June 7, 2020. The statue has been displayed in a museum since March 2024, following a survey involving 14,000 Bristolians - 80% agreed that it should be displayed in a museum (Harcombe & Bouverie 2024). Most reasonable people would agree with the survey and the recommendation to put the statue in a museum.

The appropriation and adaptation of United States of America's BLM social movement messages in the UK by thousands (mainly young) ofpeople, as the banners and the slogans suggested, came out of frustration with the state of things about racial equity in the UK. For example, in the policing area, the issue of stop and

search disproportionately impacts racial minorities. Stop and search is a policing instrument the Police use when officers, using appropriate legal provisions, reasonably suspect something is wrong. It could be, for example, a Police Officer having a reasonable suspicion that a member of the public is carrying a weapon. On the face of it, stop and search is neutral.

Moreover, in the year ending in March 2021, there was an increase of 24% in stop and search across England and Wales. Home Office figures suggest that "Black, Asian and minority ethnic … males aged 15-19 were searched 208 times for every 1,000 people" (Dodd 2021). In 2021, Black people were seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people compared to nine times the previous year. The situation with stop and search has mostly stayed the same since 2020. The data shows that, in the year ending March 2022, there were 516,684 stop and searches in England and Wales, at a rate of 8.7 for every 1,000 people; the ethnicity was not known for 103,221 (20.0%) of stop and searches recorded; there were 27.2 stop and searches for every 1,000 Black people, compared with 5.6 for every 1,000 White people; there were 9.4 stop and searches for every 1,000 people with mixed ethnicity, and 8.9 for every 1,000 Asian people; the Black Caribbean, 'Black Other' and 'Asian Other' ethnic groups had the highest rates of stop and search, out of all 19 individual ethnic groups; the 'Black Other' ethnic group had the highest rate overall with 103 stop and searches per 1,000 people – this group includes people who did not identify as Black African or Black Caribbean or were not recorded as such (GOV.UK 2023[2024])

Policing is one of the many areas where there are disparities in the experiences of racialised minorities in the UK. In the housing and homelessness sector, for example, in 2017/18, in England, 62% of homeless households were White, 14% Black, 9% Asian, 4% from a Mixed ethnic background, and 4% from the Other ethnic group; ethnicity was unknown for 6% of homeless households (GOV.UK 2018). There are disparities in other domains. For example, in the context of looked-after children, in England, "75% of looked-after children on March 31 2017 were

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White, 9% mixed ethnicity, 7% Black or Black British, 5% Asian or Asian British and 3% other ethnic groups. Non-White children appear to be slightly over-represented in the looked after children population, in particular children of mixed and Black ethnicity" (Department of Education 2017:5).

Finally, another law-and-order dimension where the disparities are evident is in the prison population; "compared to the population as a whole, [in England and Wales] the [racialised minority] population is over-represented within the prison population. In the prison population, 27% identified as an ethnic minority, compared with 18% in the general population" (Sturge 2023 p. 14). Other areas showing racial inequalities in the UK include housing status (racialised minorities more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation – Butler 2023); employment (there is occupational segregation with racialised minorities overrepresented in insecure and precarious jobs - Institute of Race Relations 2024); unemployment (racialised minority workers are more than twice - 2.2 times, as likely as White workers to face unemployment - Institute of Race Relations, 2024; poverty (more than 26% of those living in poverty are racialised minorities - UK Data Service 2022); among other indicators.

The 2020 was an epoch moment, marked, among other things, by people and some institutions stepping up to support racialised minorities' efforts to challenge racial inequalities. In the paper, I will cover the atypical (not racially similar to beneficiaries) allies – White allies. However, as the UK is a multi-racial society, in some of the institutions stepping up to become allies there are leaders from racialised minority communities. One of the intriguing developments since 2020 has been corporations, foundations, and churches doing reviews on the source of their wealth. For example, in a joint statement by the boards of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT), the three organisations highlighted that BLM, among other social movements, challenged society to do more to tackle racism and pledged to become antiracist

organisations., The statement went further and suggested that "many of the injustices faced by Black and minority ethnic people in the UK are fuelled by attitudes similar to those used during imperialism to justify the worst forms of exploitation" (JRF 2021). The Church of England records "which shows that there was awareness at a very senior level of the horrors of enslavement on … plantations" (Baptiste & Ungoed-Thomas 2024). Consequently, the Church of England set up a fund to atone the damage and take responsibility for the Church's role in slavery. Having initially pledged £100 million, the Church of England committed to work with partners to raise the fund to £1 billion because the initial fund was "small compared to the scale of racial disadvantage originating in African chattel enslavement" (Sherwood 2024).

To conclude, the thrust of the BLM protests was to encourage society to acknowledge that it was not enough to be against racism but vital to work towards becoming antiracist (Otobo 2020, p.2). UK institutions responded, among other things, by setting up Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) advisory committees. As Professor Dame Jessica Corner suggests, the appointment of an EDI Expert Advisory Group "presents an exciting opportunity for … [UKRI] to receive the expertise, insight, and challenge required to help define a set of ambitious actions which will enable us to meet those objectives" (UKRI 2023). Setting up EDI advisory was one of the many tools deployed by the institutions to become allies of the racialised minorities. Other initiatives included the recruitment of EDI leads. For example, in 2020, The Open University, appointed a Dean of EDI in 2020 (The Open University 2020).

Since 2020, there has been an increased demand for racialised minority activists to be involved in EDI consultations with local authorities, local National Health Services (NHS) trusts, and the local Police (Mutwarasibo 2021). Public services' consultations with racialised minorities are not new and have had mixed reviews. From a personal perspective, as a person ascribed the label of Black leader, involvement in consultations with local public services offers an opportunity to influence and shape how the local public services in

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addressing racial inequalities. In terms of my engagements in this context, I am on Thames Valley Police (Milton Keynes) Scrutiny Panel (from 2021); was a Covid-19 Champion with Milton Keynes Council (2020-2021); served on an Ad-hoc Milton Keynes Council / NHS Covid-19 Advisory Group (2020-2021); I was EDI trustee with MK Gallery (2020-2023); and an Honorary Vice President with Milton Keynes Community Foundation (from 2018). I am a trustee with Milton Keynes Rose (from 2021) and 5 Dimensions Trust (from 2024). To get more racialised minorities involved in consultation processes, I accepted to serve as a convener for the Milton Keynes Integration Forum (from 2020). The forum's aim is to create an engagement vehicle for local racialised minority networks especially those not currently engaged in public consultations. My social practices build on my social practices in the UK between 2014 and 2020, where I served on the leadership team of Citizens:MK (2014-2018) and was a co-lead of the Citizens:MK's Fight Against Hate Campaign (2017-2019). My experience as a racialised minority leader informed the 2023 paper on racialised minority gatekeepers. In the paper I shared a typology of gatekeeping behaviours ranging from ladder-pulling to bridge-building (Mutwarasibo 2023). This paper picks up from gatekeeping to allyship within the framework of promoting racial equity.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Promoting racial equity is a societal imperative in the UK. Moreover, racial equity is a distal goal that can only be achieved after some time. Progress is only possible if both the racialised minorities and people in positions of power work hand in hand to bring about change. People in positions of power have the ability to drive the change required to promote racial equity. People in power have to play their role as allies of racialised minority communities in opening doors. People in power can facilitate the promotion of racial equity. They can play an active role in addressing racial inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and those highlighted in BLM protests in 2020. Literature has highlighted the added value of 'White' allyship. In this paper,

we are using the concept of allyship that is more encompassing, and allyship covers both the atypical 'White' allyship and the typical allies (racialised minority leaders in mainstream institutions) who exert power and influence in society.

Allyship is "affirmation and informed action" to support people on the margins of society to improve their situation and get involved in overcoming the challenges they face (Brown & Ostrove 2013; Clark 2019, p.524). Allyship is expressed through adapting "behaviours that actively support and aim to improve the status of marginalised individuals and groups (Brown & Ostrove 2013; Ostrove & Brown 2018; De Souza & Schmader 2022, p.265). Allyship can be reactive and include reflexivity on allies' powers and institutional biases without being interested in systemic change, in contrast to proactive allyship that tends to help the disadvantaged and and make them feel included in promoting racial equity (De Souza & Schmader 2022, p.265). Literature suggests that White allies use their racial privilege to promote racial equity (Goodman 2011; Mio et al. 2009; Erskine & Bilimoria 2019, p.321), and lay the ground for organisational change and resist White colleagues who exhibit hostility to racial equity (Boutte & Jackson 2014; Brown & Ostrove 2013; Case, 2012; Gardiner, 2009; Goodman, 2011; Kivel 2011; O'Brien 2001; Erskine & Bilimoria 2019, p.321). In this paper, allyship is a verb, not a noun; in other words, it involves being an active, lifelong, and consistently reflective ally who seeks to treat marginalised communities as subjects able to play an active part in addressing their marginalisation (Erskine & Bilimoria 2019, p.321). Approaching allyship from a verb perspective means that the value of allyship is based on the beneficiaries' appreciation of allies' actions (Ashforth et al. 2016; PeerNetBC 2016; Erskine & Bilimoria 2019, p.321).

Although in literature there is a focus on two types of allyship: (a) performative and (b) authentic/substantive, a deep dive suggests various types of allyship, including:

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- Vacuous allyship underpinned by platitude but lacking real action (Hoque & Noon, 2004).
- Performative allyship that supports racialised minorities but fails to tackle inequalities (Thorne 2022).
- Emancipatory allyship that seeks to actively address systemic inequalities (Sumerau et al. 2021; Erskine & Bilimoria 2019).
- Symbolic allyship, often deployed in countries where equality legislation and provisions such as the Public Sector Equality Duty covered in the UK in the Equality Act 2010. Symbolic allyship gestures often are short in terms of substance (Myeza & April 2021).
- Authentic/substantive allyship involves meaningful actions promoting racial equity, continual self-learning, and reflections on positionality (Erskine & Bilimora 2019; Thorne 2022, p.1).

Although the literature has flagged five types of allyship, most of the literature focuses on performative allyship and authentic/substantive allyship. There is limited literature on vacuous, symbolic, and emancipatory allyship. Literature, in other words, mentions vacuous and symbolic allyship under performative allyship and emancipatory allyship under authentic and substantive allyship. Literature contrasts self-righteousness under performative allyship with self-learning and self-awareness under authentic and substantive allyship (Erskine & Bilimora 2019; Thorne 2022, p.1). Furthermore, literature suggests that performative allyship can exploit the plight of people on the margins for allies' benefits (Bourke 2020; Nixon 2019; Saad 2020; Oppong 2023, p.7). Some scholars have gone as far as suggesting that performative allyship enables 'White' allies to make Blackness and racism appear and disappear on demand (Hesford 2021, p.241).

In contrast to performative allyship, authentic and substantive allyship involves allies in positions of power taking active roles in influencing change, supporting groups on the margins with a desire to improve their situations and improve their life outcomes (Ashburn-Nardo 2018; Broido 2000; Brown 2015; Brown & Ostrove 2013; Ostrove &

Brown 2018; Radke et al. 2020, p.291). Authentic and substantive allyship requires moving beyond the standard level of concerns and compassion for people on the margins and, instead, calling on the allies to gain knowledge and insight into the intensity of marginalised communities' plight and preparedness to engage long-term and do all that it takes (Warren & Warren 2023, p.792). Authentic and substantive allyship entails supporting, not leading from the front, and using an ally's power, privilege, and other resources to change inequities and move beyond the status quo (Smith et al. 2015; Williams 2020; Williams & Sharif 2021, p.1).

IV. METHODOLOGY

This paper is autoethnographic. Autoethnography has three distinct parts: personal (auto), social (ethno), and a method connecting the personal with the social (graphy) (Chang 2016, p.444). Autoethnography takes many forms, including personal experience narrative (Denzin, 1989); reflective or narrative ethnographies (Tedlock 1991, p.78); autoethnography from below or subaltern autoethnography (Pratt 1992, p.7); and indigenous ethnography (Butz & Besio 2009, p.1668). This article takes a subaltern autoethnographic approach. Subaltern autoethnography is underpinned by transcultural self-representations of the colonised and other subordinated groups (Besio 2005, 2006; Butz 2001, 2002; Butz & MacDonald 2001; Gold 2002; Butz & Besio 2009 p.1668).

Using autoethnography enables me to reflect on my experience in figuring out how to handle my migration struggles in Western Europe, my settlement challenges and overcoming the struggles and challenges to thrive in what on paper seems like a hostile environment (Ellis & Bochner 2006 p.111). Through autoethnography, I connect with the experience of others in similar situations I encountered through my activism and research, with similar and opposite views (Chang 2008, p.26, 2016, p.444). Through the deployment of autoethnography, I actively, systematically, and scientifically reflect on my experience as a racial minority (outsider) and connecting with others, including allies (insiders)

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and the structures and powers that have generated historic racial inequities (Hughes et al. 2012, p.209). In adapting subaltern autoethnography, I am able to challenge dominant theories and hegemonic paradigms, promote social justice and fight racial inequities (Denzin 2003; Holman Jones et al. 2013; Lapadat 2017, p.589). The scientific approach means constantly thinking about my positionality and reflexivity, which is more than just introspection. Reflexivity covers the "social and political context and [requires me] to question and explore assumptions that have previously been taken for granted" (Freshwater & Rolfe 2001; Alley et al. 2015, p.427).

Subaltern autoethnography offers a pathway to finding a voice and speaking about my experience and the experiences of people with similar backgrounds sometimes denied a voice. For decades in Ireland and the UK, I have done whatever it takes to speak for myself and others whose voices are missing and sometimes suppressed (Butz & Besio 2009, p.1668). I have used action research, knowledge exchange activities and activism to respond to negative portrayal of racialised minorities in the media and political discourses (Pratt 1992, p.7). I stepped into action, especially when the reports and comments did not align with my experience or the experiences of racialised minorities I worked with in my social inclusion and migrants' rights advocacy activities. Using autoethnography has meant being sensible when dealing with interplays between my effort to treat myself as an object of signification on the one hand and, on the other hand, treating my research subjects as agents of signification (Butz & Besio 2009, p.1668).

Although this paper is autoethnographic, it benefited from my involvement in The Open University's Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership (CVSL) research on the leadership of racialised minority networks. The CVSL's research involved a series of projects, including:

- Exploring Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Leaders' Leadership Development Needs (2020-2021).

- Exploring the expansion of the pool of BME leaders that the Police consults, collaborates, and engages with (2021-2022).
- Literature review on Hard-to-Reach BME communities (2022).

Preliminary findings from the research projects above informed the content of information shared during knowledge exchange (KE) activities in Milton Keynes and Welsh cities - Swansea, Newport, and Cardiff. The theme of the KE roundtables was Overcoming Reliance on Gatekeepers: Addressing Racial Equity Through Meaningful Partnerships and Collaboration with Black and Minority Ethnic Communities at a Local Level (2022). The CVSL research team includes Prof Siv Vangen, Dr Carol Jacklin-Jarvis, Dr Fidele Mutwarasibo, Amna Sarwer, and Sahil Mathur. The CVSL team conducted 18 semi-structured interviews in 2021 (thirteen racialised minority leaders and five service provider representatives) and in 2022, the team conducted interviews with eight racialised minority leaders and one service provider representative. In addition, the team conducted five focus groups in 2021 (two with racialised minority leaders, two mixed focus groups involving racialised minority leaders and service providers' representatives and one focus group with service providers' representatives) and one mixed focus group in 2022 – involving racialised minority leaders and service providers' representatives. The rich data gathered in the research is currently being analysed and by and large outside the scope of this paper.

This paper is informed by the CVSL research and my social and political practices, some of which are featured in the context and positionality section of the paper. As part of my autoethnographic research, I triangulated and used several tools to gather the data. These tools include

- A reflective diary used to capture the critical incidents.
- Fieldnotes taken during routine CVSL research activities.

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- Observation notes capturing both verbal and non-verbal communication in my research practices and social activism.
- Conversations with my peers and Andrew Mupenzi, the artist who developed the portraits used in this paper. The portraits emerged through regular discussions and debriefings on the research.
- Group interactions with other racialised minority leaders.
- Artefacts collected during the research, social practices or those I come across accidentally.
- Document analysis, covering reports, newspaper articles, and social media reports about the subject of interest – allyship.

In addition to ongoing dialogue with the illustrator, Andrew Mupenzi, I engaged in ethnographic-theoretical dialog. Ethnographic-theoretical dialog involves continually "bringing theoretical questions into dialog" in my autoethnography (Pink & Morgan 2013, p.357). KE activities referred to earlier in the paper and many more KE activities since were part of the ethnographic-theoretical dialog and the time taken to reflect on the information gathered over a long period, especially the data that resonated with my lived experience.

4.1 Findings

The findings in this paper are grouped in typologies represented by five portraits produced by a professional artist/illustrator (Andrew Mupenzi) based on the interpretation of our regular discussions for over four years. The portraits are visual tools capturing the findings from the data gathered using various research tools. Typology development features qualitative research (Alquist & Breunig 2012; Glegg 2019, p.301) and the portraits in this paper are based on similarities in the narratives shared (Bailey 2011; Glegg 2019 p.301). The paper uses portraits to align with qualitative research traditions such as anthropology and ethnography, where visualisation has historically been used to generate data, in data analysis and in KE activities (Borgatti et al. 2013; Mason 2005; Glegg 2019, p.301).

The findings are covered under five allyship typologies, and in the following section, I go through each typology separately. The five typologies are vacuous, performative, symbolic, substantive/authentic, and emancipatory allyship. The findings from each typology are captured in a portrait. In line with the work of proponents of typologies, such as Audulv et al. (2023, p.3), I used typologies to classify allyship in groups based on similarities (Bailey 1994), used typologies to illustrate differences in allyship practices (Patton 2015); and in this paper allyship typologies are not fixed but used to picture the dimensions of allyship (Macduf 2007).

4.2 Vacuous Allyship

In the aftermath of the 2020 BLM protests, there were moves in many organisations to become antiracist and inclusive. In a focus group held on May 18, 2021, representatives of service providers debated the openness of their services to racialised minorities. One participant suggested their door was open to everyone, triggering interesting debates. The response from other participants was swift, and they argued that having a sign saying that the door is open does not necessarily make it open. The focus group acknowledged that the service providers have minimal contact with some communities and said that more than just opening the door is needed. Participants argued that service providers needed to do more to gain trust and improve access to services for communities and serve all communities equitably.

Participants in the research and KE activities stressed the need to raise awareness on ethnic diversity while at the same time avoiding the trap of labeling some of the communities as hard-to-reach. A participant in the May 18, 2021, focus group, suggested that the service providers, as allies, should be consistent in their inclusion approach and avoid reacting to crises only when the media zooms in and start to ask them questions. As suggested by the participant, structured inclusion is intentional and not just addressed by rhetorical responses such as the door being always open.

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In a knowledge exchange roundtable held on September 27, 2022, there was acknowledgement that the door was open to some and closed to other racialised minority communities. During the session, participants argued that service providers look for the low-hanging fruit and engage with the same cohort of racialised minority leaders and in turn expect them to help service providers with access to all racialised minorities. Participants expressed the view that this was an unrealistic task. This point was underscored by a participant in the May 18, 2021, focus group who reminded those in attendance of the importance of acknowledging diversity within diversity. In other words, opening the door to some racialised minorities does not mean it is open to all.

During the May 18, 2021, focus group, a participant recommended allies to ensure that they are not unintentionally excluding people while at the same time portraying their doors as open. Other issues flagged in the research and KE activities include allies lacking intercultural communication skills; inability to engage with people who are not proficient in English; and fetishising some racialised minority communities can be a barrier and lead to losing their trust. During a focus group held on May 17, 2021, the allies' tendency to speak to racialised minority leaders representing racialised communities with a critical mass (large communities) and ignore communities with smaller communities was identified as a challenge. Using the analogy of the open door may mean allies engaging with some communities and closing the door to other communities. The focus groups and the KE activities also suggested that the ally's door seems to be more open for racialised minority faith leaders and middle-aged/ middle-class men and less open to the young and women.

As portrait 1 below suggests, vacuous allyship is translated into statements such as the door is open to everyone while, in reality, the door is closed to many. Some of the racialised minorities can go through, but the allies lack the commitment to structural racial equity. Hypothetically, the door is not locked; some racialised minorities can go through the door, but

others feel locked out and may not even try to check if the door is open. Vacuous allyship is at the bottom of the allyship pyramid. It may be better than the old window adverts in post-World War II Britain – "No blacks, no dogs, no Irish" (Verma, 2018). However, it makes little difference in challenging the status quo and bringing about lasting change and promoting racial equity.

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Portrait 1: Vacuous Allyship

4.3 Performative Allyship

Vacuous allyship, as outlined above, is at the bottom of the allyship pyramid and has little impact in bringing about and sustaining changes in addressing the racial inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and vividly captured by the messages that underpinned the BLM protests in the UK in 2020. The next level on the allyship pyramid is performative allyship. Performative allyship looks better on the outside but does little to advance the racial equity agenda.

On September 2, 2021, following an approach by a public institution, I convened a meeting for a facilitator in a public consultation process. The approach by the service provider followed their inability to engage effectively with racialised minorities through the conventional consultative mechanisms. Convincing the facilitator that the consultation session had to take place in the evening was a huddle because they expected it to happen during working hours. The facilitator was oblivious to the fact that the racialised minority networks' leaders engage in such a processes in their free time because they have a work-life to manage, and very few of these networks have money to hire staff who can engage in consultation processes in working hours unlike other from mainstream institutions who get involved in such processes in their paid-time hours. On August 19, 2021, I had a similar conversation in another consultation where I was expected to field a group of racialised minority networks' leaders. I could only secure the participation of a retired racialised minority leader. The irony is that in previous communications with the officials involved, we had raised concerns about the expectations of engagement with racialised minority networks without investment and capacity building and funding for these networks.

In a phone call with a racialised minority leader on February 6, 2023, I was reminded that following the BLM protests in 2020, there were many performative racial equity initiatives born out of guilt consciousness that were "falling apart before our eyes" and that needed to move to higher levels on the allyship pyramid, if society were to move effectively in bringing about

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substantive and systemic change. Performative allyship may make some allies feel better, but in the long term, as the 2023 call suggests, performative allyship is just performative and not meaningful. In a meeting with a racialised minority leader on February 8, 2023, I was reminded of performative allies ranking racialised minorities and demonstrating their allyship credentials through their engagement with selected communities. The racialised minority leader went further and argued that colourism (prioritising those with a lighter skin tone) underpins some allies' selection of who they engage with, with "Blacks at the bottom". This conversation followed another conversation with the same leader on December 8, 2022, when, during the announcement section of a meeting, the "White" ally shared dates of the forthcoming racialised minority communities' festivals and failed to mention Black History Month, which was, at the time, around the corner. The experience shared by the leader was reminiscent of my own experience, where I found myself on an ad hoc racial equity advisory committee in 2020 and noted that along with other racialised minority leaders, we were selected because we

were members of a particular social group (educated or high public profile) and unlikely to cause trouble and rock the boat. This situation is what led me to start questioning my position and question my racialised minority leader credentials. How many times have I been asked by 'White' allies whom I represent? Consequently, I have been spelling out that I represent my experience, which may not resonate with all racialised minority communities.

As Portrait 2 suggests, when allyship is performative, the door is wide open and racialised minorities are in but, in the main, the racialised minorities are expected to know their space. Performative allies feel good and can tick boxes, but their practices remain the same and there is limited effort in promoting racial equity. For performative allyship to succeed, the allies need a compliant racialised minority communities' representation. Some of the racialised minority leaders may be happy to perform the ladder-pulling and ubiquitous gatekeeper roles in pursuit of their own goals, casting aside the challenges of the communities they claim to represent (Mutwarasibo 2023).

Portrait 2: Performative Allyship

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4.4 Symbolic Allyship

In countries with equality legislation like the UK, with public sector equality duty provisions, such as the *Equality Act 2010*, public institutions are expected to make a concerted effort to demonstrate their commitment to equality. These institutions are also encouraged to consider deploying positive actions. The provisions do not mean affirmative action or positive discrimination. It is not surprising that ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers (Mutwarasibo 2023) thrive in such a context. At a conference held on December 8, 2022, many racialised minority networks' leaders expressed their frustration with symbolic allyship that relies on allies having on their books ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers as cover for their lack of commitment to racial equity. Participants went further and suggested that ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers help 'White' allies in their exclusionary behaviours. This experience came at the foot of a workshop held on September 29, 2022, where participants decried the behaviours of racialised minority ladder-pulling gatekeepers. Participants felt betrayed by racialised minority leaders who sell out and use the racialised minority communities as a steppingstone for their selfish goals.

The behaviours of the ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers and the cover they get from symbolic allies also came up at another workshop held on September 20, 2022. During the workshop participants questioned the motivation of the allies who ignore the complaints about the representation credentials of the racialised minority leaders they engage and collaborate with. Some good initiatives addressing these concerns arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, where some local authorities called for members of public the to apply for the role of COVID-19 champions in the community. Having responded to a call from Milton Keynes Council in 2020, I felt that open calls where candidates are assessed on their merits might help in overcoming allies' reliance on ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers and, in the process, encourage allies to raise their level of engagement on the allyship pyramid. Holding the racialised minority gatekeeper accountable should be on the agenda of the allies. I performed my role as COVID-19 champion and but do not feel that I was not held accountable or asked how much dissemination work I did. As we move on with the typologies and move to the upper echelons of the allyship pyramid, it will be crystal clear that impactful allyship needs constant reviews of the ally's relationships and interactions with the beneficiaries.

In a focus group held on October 6, 2022, allies were reminded to change their approach, move on from symbolic allyship, and prioritise racialised minority networks' leadership development and capacity building. Participants, in other words advocated resourcing racialised minority networks. Such a move, in participants' view, will be vital in overcoming the reliance ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers. Initiatives are taking place in this direction. For example, on November 10, 2021, Milton Keynes Council's representatives spoke at a workshop hosted by the Milton Keynes Intercultural Forum in a drive to recruit racialised minority community representatives to diversify the membership of school governors. This action recognised that previous interventions by allies did not yield an expansion and diversification of the school governors' pool. During the session, there was recognition that although allies had managed to recruit school governors among racialised minority communities, the school governors were not representative of the school population.

The skepticism of racialised minority leaders about allies' recruitment of tokenistic racialised minority representatives came out at a Milton Keynes Intercultural Forum townhall held on January 18, 2021. Some participants expressed reluctance to join the forum because they thought that the people behind the initiative were creating a new structure to use in order to join the inner room where important consultations take place and overshadow other racialised minority networks' leaders. The skepticism resonates with my experience with symbolic allyship, which, as participants suggest falls short when it comes to the authenticity of allies. In participants' view, allies are happy to engage in tokenism but

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unwilling to change and become authentic and empathetic partners.

As Portrait 3 suggests, tokenism underpins symbolic allyship. Symbolic allies will keep the door wide open, but not all the racialised minorities who get through the door are treated the same in symbolic allyships. Token racialised minority leaders engage with the allies and get invited to the inner room. Other racialised minorities are not listened to and, at worst, fetishised by the allies. This experience aligns with the comments that came up in the interview with BME1 in 2021, where the participant commented on attending an event with a public institution where instead of getting a hearing on what brought them to meet the allies, the only comment they got was that they were flamboyant and good dancers, as the participant suggested: "there's so much about us than dancing and being flamboyant". Symbolic allyship maintains the status quo with some symbolic allyship gestures that do not have much impact in advancing racial equity.
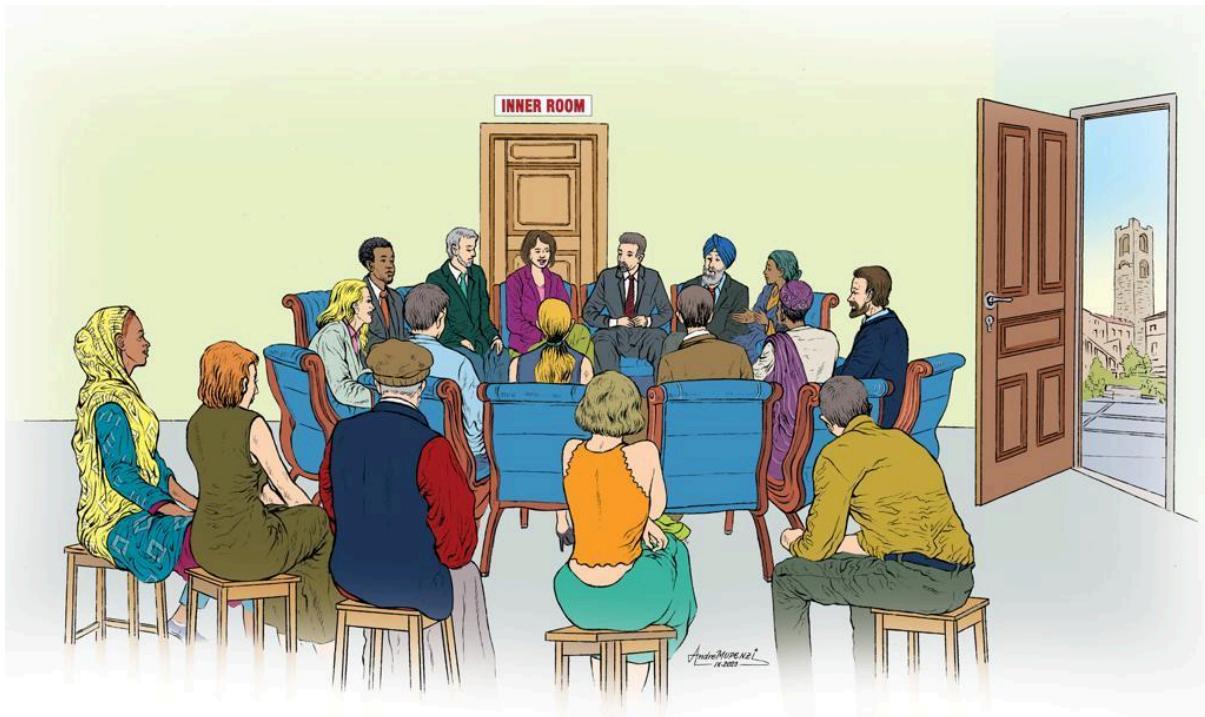
Portrait 3: Symbolic Allyship

4.5 Substantive and Authentic Allyship

The penultimate step on the allyship pyramid is substantive and authentic allyship. At a meeting with two voluntary sector leaders on April 24, 2023, two allies condemned tokenism and overreliance on non-representative ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers. The same points were underscored in a public consultation hosted by a public institution on March 18, 2023. The ally who led the session stressed the need for a change of approach in developing relationships with racialised minority communities to sustain the changes needed to address racial inequalities in the long-term.

In a meeting with a voluntary sector ally on February 7, 2023, the racialised minority representation deficit came up and tokenism was condemned. The ally recognised that the need to invest in building the capacity of the racialised minority networks. The voluntary sector ally felt that capacity building and resourcing the racialised minority networks would leverage the power differential between allies and racialised minorities. Without addressing the power differential, the voluntary sector ally suggested that the role of racialised minority networks' leaders in promoting racial equity would remain peripheral. Another ally, in a meeting on February

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2, 2022, suggested that the voluntary sector needed to change and move away from symbolic allyship and towards authentic and substantive allyship. This change of approach in effect, would mean not only opening the door to those previously overlooked, sidelining the token racialised minority leaders, sharing power and resources, and treating the racialised minority communities with respect. Another ally, at a meeting on April 6, 2022, recommended allies work with bridge-building racialised minority gatekeepers who, unlike their ladder-pulling counterparts, are willing to share the little power they have with others and hold their allies accountable (Mutwarasibo 2023).

Sharing power and holding allies accountable for their work in promoting racial equity came to the fore in a meeting with two allies representing the third and public sectors held on April 8, 2022. The meeting was initiated by a voluntary sector ally who wanted me to share my research insights. The focus was on racialised minority communities' access to services and their potential role in shaping public service delivery

rather than being just users/consumers of these services. The need to build the capacity of racialised minority networks and leveraging their power emerged from the meeting as a strategic priority. At the meeting building the capacity and investing in these networks emerged. The same issues came up at a meeting with an ally representing a foundation providing resources for racialised minority networks on October 22, 2021.

As Portrait 5 suggests, authentic and substantive allyship implies power sharing. In line with the analogy of the open door, substantive and authentic allyship means that opening the door is no longer the issue; there is no longer an inner room, less hierarchy, and the allies are happy to acknowledge the power differential and their privileged position. As the service providers who shared their insights above suggested, the turning point in substantive and authentic allyship is the willingness to engage racialised minority networks in the coproduction of knowledge and designing public service delivery.

Portrait 4: Substantive and Authentic Allyship

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4.6 Emancipatory Allyship

The final tier of the allyship pyramid is emancipatory allyship. Building on what allies suggested above concerning authentic and substantive allyship, in a meeting with an ally on October 10, 2022, participants argued for the amplification of the voice of racialised minority communities. This observation followed what two allies told me on October 7, 2022, after acknowledging the behaviour of ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers serving their self-interest and not using their access to allies to promote racial equity. The allies changed their approach to the recruitment of racialised minority representatives to engage and collaborate with, in their work on promoting racial equity. The changes included introducing term limits for membership of advisory committees, and establishing an open recruitment process widely advertised to open expand membership of advisory panels beyond the usual racialised minority gatekeepers.. The same issues came up in two meetings with two allies held on February 3rd and 16th, 2022, where they shared their frustrations with a ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeeper with a dominating influence on the membership of racialised minority advisory panels. The racialised minority gatekeeper had been doing all they could to restrict membership of an advisory panel to their friends and acquaintances, excluding other worthy candidates. On April 29, 2024, at a KE workshop, a change in the recruitment process for advisory panels to make them more accountable to racialised minority communities came up for discussions. Participants recommended investing in leadership development, capacity building of racialised minority networks and encouraging allies to share some of their powers with racialised minorities.

At a KE event I hosted on March 22, 2022, contributors articulated, among other things, embedding lived experience in grant-making. This suggestion arose because grantmakers have historically neglected lived experience leadership and seldomly seek racialised minority communities' views and insights when reviewing their strategies and approaches to grant-making.

At the meeting participants acknowledged that BLM protests in 2020 were a turning point. There is evidence, according to participants that, things are moving in the right direction. Moreover, there was an acknowledgement more power needed to be ceded to the racialised minorities to enhance their contribution racial equity. I supported two racialised minority leaders in their voluntary work on mental health among the racially minoritised communities, after a while I realised that the service was needed but could not be sustained through voluntary activities. On October 21, 2021, I connected them with a public commissioner to enable them to make their point and make a case for funding. The meeting triggered follow-up engagements that led to securing funding to facilitate their transition from offering voluntary services to remunerated service provision.

Emancipatory allyship also came up at a knowledge exchange I contributed to on March 13, 2024, where a racialised minority leader shared two experiences of emancipatory allyship. These experiences included an ally who passed on an opportunity to attend a high-level leadership course overseas to a racialised minority leader. The ally felt that the racialised minority leader would benefit more from the experience. The ally was also conscious that they would have other opportunities for personal development in the future in contrast to racialised minority leaders with limited leadership and personal development opportunities. Another example shared was an official who ran a vital decision with racialised minority leaders. The decision related to the appointment of a racialised minority to a sensible local post. When the racialised minority leaders outlined the potential impact on the individual, on the one hand, being seen as a spy (snitch) by racialised minority communities and on the other hand, being seen as an intruder (space invader) not worthy of trust by the majority population, the ally changed the decision. In reversing the decision, the ally saved the individual concerned from potential conflicts between the 'White' majority population and their racialised minority counterparts and kept community relations positive.

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As Portrait 5 suggests, emancipatory allyship entails shared and distributed power. The allies in this context are prepared to leave their offices and comfort zones and find the racialised minority communities where they are, listen to them, and ensure that the latter are involved in high-level decision-making processes. As outlined above, emancipatory allyship involves the enhanced capacity of racialised minority networks involved, mentoring, and sponsorship. Emancipatory allyship is hence more than opening the door and may involved knocking on the door of racialised minority networks, reverse mentoring, meeting the people where they are and using the allies' privileged position to share power and opportunities.
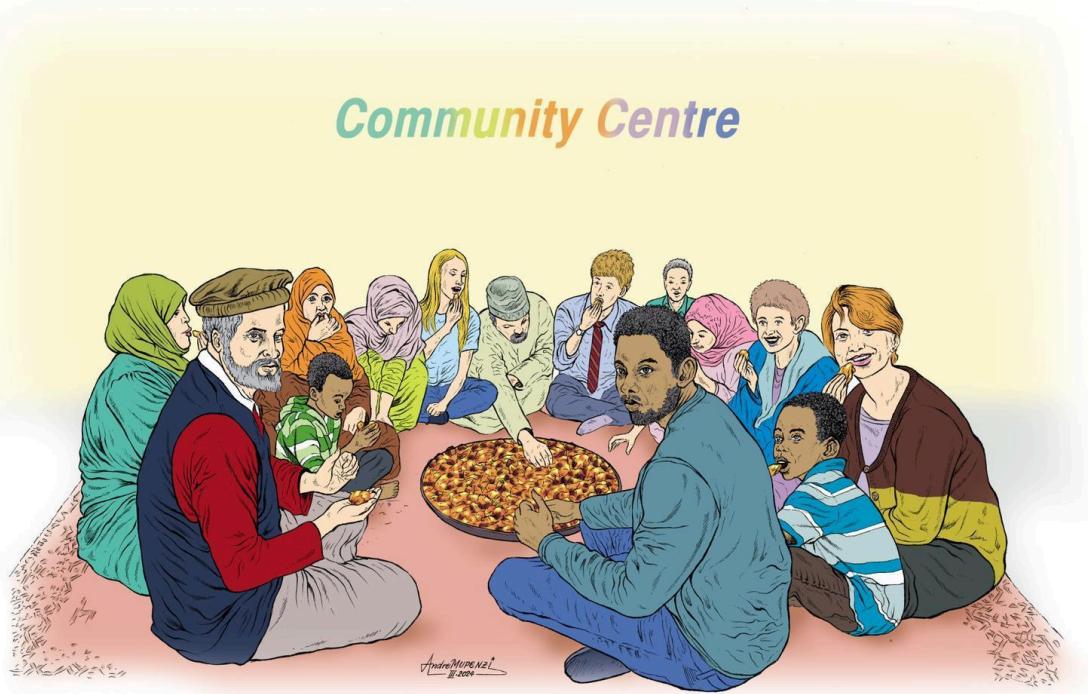
Portrait 5: Emancipatory Allyship

V. DISCUSSIONS

The findings on vacuous allyship align with the literature (Hoique & Noon 2004). Pointing out that vacuous allyship is an empty shell in literature means that it is the bottom step on the allyship pyramid, which aligns with the research findings. Vacuous allyship does not make a difference in pursuing racial equity. Vacuous allyship has been used in times of crisis by those playing lip service to racial equity. Vacuous allyship should be called out, and those who practice it should be made aware of their behaviours and encouraged to change. The debate has moved on from the post-World War II "No Blacks, No Irish, No Dog" (Verma 2018). There is little evidence to suggest that adopting the vacuous allyship makes any difference in promoting inclusion and, better still, promoting racial equity. Deploying vacuous allyship practices will not adequately address the racial inequalities exposed by COVID-19 and answer the BLM protests' call for racial equality.

The second step on the allyship pyramid is performative allyship. Although it is an extension of vacuous allyship, and its practitioners adopt it to make claims about their commitments as allies, performative allyship makes little difference in progressing the race equity agenda (Thorne 2022). Research findings align with the literature concerning allies who practice performative allyship to make themselves look good and promote their self-interest (Bourke 2020; Nixon 2019; Saad 2020; Oppong 2023, p.7). This literature aligns with my observations of the racialised minority networks' leaders' social and political practices and four years of ongoing research on their leadership. As the research

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participants suggested, performative allies cannot be trusted to promote racial equity. Their approach is short-term and headline-grabbing and allies need to be committed to systemic change to address the challenges relating to racial equity.

Performative allyship leads smoothly to the third step on the allyship pyramid – symbolic allyship. The research suggests a connection between the equality legislative framework and symbolic allyship. The provisions from the legislation, especially those relating to public sector equality duty, raise expectations for public institutions to engage and collaborate with people and institutions representing the various members of society including racialised minority communities. As the research suggests, symbolic allyship lacks substance (Myeza & April 2021). Research also highlighted that symbolic allyship is abused by ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers who use it to progress their personal agendas (Mutwarasibo 2023) while discarding the bigger picture of racial equity.

As research suggests, what makes substantive/authentic allyship different is the investment allies put in systemically improving the situation with racial inequities (Ashburn-Nardo 2018; Broido 2000; Brown, 2015; Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Ostrove & Brown 2018; Radke et al. 2020, p.291). Research recommends allies to examine their position critically, challenge their peers perpetuating racial inequities, and accept to continuously learn and acquaint themselves with what is going on and what needs improving (Erskine & Bilimora 2019; Thorne 2022, p.1). Research findings align with the literature and offer insights into how authentic and substantive works in practice. One of the practices the authentic and substantive allies need to set aside is tokenism. The allies also must keep an eye on the racialised minority gatekeepers they engage with and especially avoid the ladder-pulling gatekeepers who might derail their racial equity mission.

Finally, emancipatory allyship requires stretching the substantive and authentic allyship practices to level the playing field and deploy genuine power-sharing practices. Changing approaches is critical to bringing about systemic racial equity changes (Sumerau et al. 2021; Erskine & Bilimoria 2019), where racialised minorities are agents and the allies engage in sponsoring, opening locked doors, advocating with, and overall moving from promoter to background supporter. As the research suggests, emancipatory allyship means doing more than just being committed to engaging in practices aimed at promoting racial equity. As highlighted in the findings, it requires sometimes stepping aside and letting the leadership of racialised minority come out and be more prominent. Emancipatory allyship also entails holding the racialised minority leaders accountable and calling out ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeeping.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic made what may have been invisible racial inequalities apparent. The Murder of George Floyd in the USA on May 25, 2020, triggered the appropriation and adaptation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests' messages worldwide. The BLM protests captured the local racial inequities in the messages underpinning the BLM protests in the UK.

The year 2020 was epoch-making as it triggered soul-searching exercises across all spheres of society. Businesses, churches, public institutions, and philanthropic organisations started reviews of their engagement with racialised minorities. These institutions took a deep look at the overall experience and life outcomes of racialised minorities in the UK. Some, including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Church of England, committed not only to change their approach but also to do more in addressing their connections to slavery. Furthermore many public institutions made concerted efforts to engage with the racialised minorities. Allyship gained prominence as a discourse to capture organisations and individuals' commitment to racial equity.

2020 saw increased demand to join ad hoc and consultative panels set up by the local council and the NHS. Although I had previously been active in

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the voluntary sector, my engagement has increased significantly since 2020. This experience led me to question my position and gatekeeper status. Parallel to this, I have been researching the leadership of racialised minority networks and how this leadership engages and collaborates with service providers. This paper is a subaltern autoethnography. It is informed by my empirical research involving focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. The paper also relied on my reflective diary, engagement in knowledge exchange activities and my social practices as a racialised minority leader engaging regularly with allies.

Allyship has been a subject of research for some time. However, literature has focused on two extremes – performative allyship on the one hand and authentic and substantive allyship on the other. A deep dive into literature picked up more forms of allyship and helped develop a typology that includes – vacuous, performative, symbolic, authentic/substantive, and emancipatory allyship. Research suggests the need to expand research on the types of allyship and review the current focus on performative and authentic/substantive allyship. Research suggests that using a variety of methods would make a difference and expand the literature. The paper has highlighted essential considerations for practicing and promoting racial equity. To name just a few considerations – holding racialised minority gatekeepers accountable, assessment of the value of allyship based on the views of beneficiaries, constantly reviewing allies' positionality, need to invest in racialised minority communities' leadership development and capacity building, ethical business practices to avoid engaging in modern-day slavery practices, avoiding engaging in tokenism, and above all treating all members of society with respect and dignity.

This paper has shed light on the fact that allyship takes many forms and is more than just performative or substantive/authentic. The paper also has highlighted that different types of allyship encourage or deter harmful racialised minority leaders' gatekeeping behaviours, such as ladder-pulling gatekeeping. Performative and symbolic allyships, for example, give cover to ladder-pulling racialised minority gatekeepers. Authentic/substantive and emancipatory allyships are likely to promote the practices of bridge-building racialised minority goalkeepers. Bringing about systemic racial equity changes requires scrutinising power relations and sharing power. Sharing power, by extension, entails ensuring that the racialised minorities' representation plays an integral part in shaping the racial equity agenda. As the research suggests, the ultimate allyship is emancipatory. Emancipatory allyship involvesexpanding the membership of racial equity decision-making structures to authentic and accountable racialised minority representatives.

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A Study on the Cultural Values of Asian Hotels from the Perspective of Feng Shui

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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of Feng Shui culture, this study examines six hotels in Hong Kong and Bangko By observing the design, decoration, and environmental layout of these hotels, as well as interviewin hotel staff on-site, the study explores the cultural values embodied in Asian hotel culture. Through three-tier coding system, the research identifies the cultural values of Asian hotels as respecting t natural environment, valuing traditional culture, emphasizing harmony and balance, respecting gue needs, and considering destiny. These findings provide a basis for a better understanding of custom needs in the hotel industry and for improving their hospitality culture. They also offer valuable insigh for future hotel design and management practices.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced era of rapid development, the Asian hotel industry has formed its own paradigm due to its unique culture, social values, and traditional beliefs (Chon, 2020). The cultural values of Asian hotels play a significant guiding role in shaping the customer culture, hotel style, design, and service. This study aims to explore the unique cultural representation of Feng Shui and its impact on the external style of Asian hotels. Six hotels in Hong Kong and Bangkok were selected as the research objects. By employing observation methods, the study analyzes the elements and details of Feng Shui's "harmony between heaven and humanity" perspective in the hotel's design, decoration, and environmental layout. The goal is to identify the cultural values that provide guests with a sense of home and a positive experience through hotel design.In summary, this study seeks to identify the specific manifestation of Feng Shui in the external style of Asian hotels, analyze its influence on hotel design, and explore the intrinsic connection between Feng Shui and the cultural values of Asian hotels.

Approaching from the perspective of Feng Shui culture, this study explores the cultural values of Asian hotels, revealing their essence and characteristics. This has important theoretical implications for studying the relationship between culture and the hotel industry. Firstly, this study expands the scope of hotel culture research, moving beyond the influence of Western culture and delving into the impact of Asian culture on hotel culture. Secondly, by examining hotel culture from the perspective of Feng Shui culture, this study explores the deeper meanings and cultural backgrounds, providing a unique viewpoint and approach that offer new perspectives for hotel culture research.

Furthermore, this study uncovers the characteristics and values of Asian hotel culture, which hold significant practical implications for the hotel industry. Firstly, a deep understanding of the cultural values of Asian hotel culture can enhance the understanding of Asian guests' needs and cultural backgrounds, thereby better meeting their expectations and improving service quality and customer satisfaction. Secondly, this study provides insights for hotel design and management by incorporating Asian cultural elements, enhancing the cultural uniqueness and brand value of hotels. Lastly, this research offers valuable insights for the sustainable development of the hotel industry, such as emphasizing environmental protection in hotel architecture design and promoting harmonious coexistence.

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II. LITERATURE

2.1 Feng Shui Culture and Its Values

A total of 942 literature sources were found on CNKI using "Feng Shui culture" as the keyword. Based on the subject classification, the majority of these sources were concentrated in the fields of architectural science and engineering (33.92%), religion (18.06%), tourism (14.38%), and culture (7.74%). Further refinement by selecting "academic journals" as the criteria revealed 55 articles classified under tourism and 55 articles under culture. Among the tourism-related articles, 7 focused on Feng Shui culture as the main theme, while 7 articles explored Feng Shui culture in relation to Langzhong ancient city, and 4 articles examined Yang Xianling, along with other literature focusing on scenic areas such as Zhuge Bagua Village in Lanxi, Zhejiang Province (Zhang H, 2008). In the field of culture, Li Qike and Cao Xingsui (2013) conducted a comparative study on Feng Shui culture in China, Japan, and South Korea, and Liao Yang (2000) discussed the Feng Shui culture of the Han ethnic group in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Numerous scholars have focused their research on the Feng Shui culture of specific cities and villages.

According to the definition in "Cihai" (2000), Feng Shui, also known as "Kanyu," refers to the situation of wind direction and water flow around residential sites or burial grounds, which can bring fortune or misfortune to the occupants or the family.

Feng Shui study is a comprehensive environmental science that combines physics, psychology, hydrogeology, environmental ecology, meteorology, and other disciplines(Han Zenglu, 1996). Feng Shui culture is an ancient "architectural planning and design theory" that can guide the contemporary tourism industry(Wang Qiheng, 1992; Xu Jianghua, 2012a; Chen Chuankang, 1998). After centuries of development, the emphasis on Feng Shui principles and taboos has become an important part of everyday life for Chinese society, and Feng Shui has become a form of "collective unconsciousness" (Zhou Yaoming, 2004). Since the 17th century, Feng Shui culture has spread worldwide, and foreign scholars have also conducted research and application on Feng Shui (Tang Jianbing, 2009), recognizing that Chinese Feng Shui is a comprehensive natural science (Guo Zhongduan, Kori Ko, 1980) with significant landscape scientific value (Eitel, 1878; Lynch, 1964; Yin Hongji, 1994).

Kang Yu (2001) stated that Feng Shui is a concept established by ancient Chinese sages to adapt to and coordinate the development between humans and nature. The core concept in Feng Shui theory is "qi," which refers to vital energy, and the goal is to protect the "qi" of the environment from depletion (He Huabin, 2020). The core principle is to construct a harmonious living environment for humans and the environment based on the laws of nature (Yu Xixian, 2016). Feng Shui describes a relatively harmonious spatial environment where people can live and work comfortably (Qin Shufeng, 2006). Fan Yinghua (2005) believes that Feng Shui culture combines modern ecology and environmental science to protect the environment and create a livable environment for humanity. Lin Yutang regards Feng Shui culture as having aesthetic significance (Huang Zhuoyue, 2004). Observations of astronomical phenomena, natural phenomena, and human behavior are the basis of fundamental Feng Shui knowledge. These observations, combined with astronomy, geography, and philosophy, form the theories of Feng Shui. Feng Shui theories mainly include yin and yang, the five elements, the eight trigrams, and the Book of Changes (Yijing).

The concept of yin and yang runs through Feng Shui culture and describes the evolutionary process from Wuji (ultimateless) to Taiji (the supreme ultimate), Liangyi (duality), Sizhang (four phenomena), and the myriad things in the world. The five elements generate and control each other, representing the basic laws of motion and interaction between matter. The five elements are also related to shapes, such as circles representing metal, curves representing water, straight lines representing wood, diagonals representing fire, and squares representing earth. The five elements are also related to materials, colors, and numbers (Feng Xianwei, 2019a). The

Book of Changes is the basic philosophical foundation of Feng Shui. Also known as the Yijing or Zhouyi, it is regarded as the foremost of the Confucian classics. It was first applied to the heavenly path and then combined with the earthly and human paths, forming a unity and integration of heaven, earth, and humanity. The Bagua (eight trigrams) is the visual representation of the ideas in the Book of Changes (Wang Tao, 2020).

The Bagua can be divided into the Pre-Heaven Bagua and the Post-Heaven Bagua. The combination of the two forms a design language for spatial layout (Kang Liang, 2001). The Pre-Heaven Bagua, also known as the Fu Xi Bagua, consists of four yang and four yin lines corresponding to heaven, earth, thunder, wood, water, fire, mountain, and marsh, presenting a three-dimensional state in the natural environment. The Post-Heaven Bagua, also known as the Wen Wang Bagua, consists of eight lines corresponding to the north, southwest, east, southeast, northwest, west, northeast, and south, presenting a two-dimensional state. The cosmic spatial concepts of the Bagua can be applied to regional division and functional positioning, achieving a well-organized combination of multidimensional spatial environments (Sheng Jin, 2010).

III.   METHODS

This study primarily utilizes the method of observation for data collection and analysis. In research methodology, the observation method is a means of gathering data by observing and documenting phenomena. It can be employed to investigate the underlying meanings of various phenomena, including human behavior, social phenomena, and natural phenomena. It holds significant importance for understanding human society and culture. As the core of this study revolves around exploring the values reflected in the design of Asian hotels, the observation method is deemed suitable for conducting this research.

After determining the research questions, the researchers visited a total of six hotels for on-site observations and data collection. These hotels include The Hotel Icon in Hong Kong, Rosewood Hotel in Hong Kong, Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok, Sukhothai Hotel in Bangkok, Rosewood Hotel in Bangkok, and Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Bangkok. The researchers took photographs and recorded the observed data during the visits. Finally, the research team analyzed the 279 captured photos and conducted data analysis. Through the analysis and interpretation of the images, they aimed to reveal the cultural significance and values reflected in the Asian hotel designs. Therefore, this study employed the observational method, which not only helps uncover the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of Asian hotel designs but also provides valuable insights and references for the development and dissemination of Asian hotel paradigms.

IV.   DATA PROCESSING

4.1 Open Coding

The research team started by selecting, organizing, and categorizing the 279 photos. They used open coding to determine the photo categories, based on the following criteria:

4.1.1 Location

According to Feng Shui culture, the location of a hotel should avoid unfavorable terrains and instead choose flat and open areas. Additionally, the convenience of transportation and the avoidance of unfavorable surroundings should be considered, opting for places with beautiful environments and pleasant scenery. A superior location helps attract positive energy (auspicious qi). For example, the Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok, as the first urban resort hotel, is surrounded by the Chao Phraya River and the Royal Park. "Embracing mountains and encircling waters" is an important principle in traditional Feng Shui. The concept of "water embrace" resembles the welcoming gesture of a person's outstretched arms, symbolizing hospitality and a favorable ambiance.

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Fig. 1: The Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok

4.1.2 Architectural Design

In addition to having a square shape, Feng Shui culture also values the beauty of "subtlety and elegance." For example, the hotels feature multiple spiral staircases, combining to create rich variations and achieving a profound artistic effect. Another example is the architectural design of the Rosewood Hotel in Bangkok, which resembles "two hands clasped together in prayer." In Thailand, influenced by Buddhist culture, people are not accustomed to shaking hands but instead greet each other with a prayer-like gesture. In Buddhism, clasping hands together symbolizes goodwill, peace, unity, the aspiration for harmony, and the recognition of the inseparability of all phenomena.

Fig. 2: The architectural design of the Rosewood Hotel in Bangkok

4.1.3 Entrance

According to Feng Shui beliefs, the location of the entrance can influence the overall energy flow of a space. In hotels, the entrance should be designed in an area associated with auspicious symbols or dragons, or next to auspicious numbers such as "8" or "9". This is believed to enhance the hotel's attractiveness and fortune. The entrance of The Hotel Icon in Hong Kong has two doors, and the door on the right side, when looking from the inside out, is usually kept open. This arrangement, combined with the strategic positioning of flower beds, completely avoids a direct alignment between the hotel and the road in front. The staircase leading to the lobby is positioned facing the check-in counter rather than the entrance door, avoiding a clash between the door and the flow of energy.

Fig. 3: Hotel Icon in Hong Kong

4.1.4 Environmental Arrangement

At the B1 floor of the Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok, there is an arrangement of green plants, artificial mountains, and water curtains surrounding the restaurant. This setup reflects the harmonious beauty between humans and nature. The lighting ceremony adds a warm touch to the guest experience. From the perspective of the Five Elements in Feng Shui, the interplay between fire and water represents the concept of mutual generation and restraint. This kind of arrangement is commonly seen in Asian hotel architecture and design, and it symbolizes the balance and harmony between different elements.

Fig. 4: Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok

At the Sukhothai Hotel Bangkok, water elements are prominently featured. The hotel incorporates locally grown aquatic plants and uses sculptures that reflect the local religious culture as decorations. Additionally, glass walls are often utilized in public spaces such as the multipurpose halls. The hotel staff explains that this design helps to ward off negative energy and promote a favorable atmosphere.

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Fig. 5: Sukhothai Hotel Bangkok

4.1.5 Space Layout

According to feng shui principles, the interior space should be well-planned, flowing, and comfortable. Therefore, hotel designs take into consideration the arrangement of entrances, walkways, and sightlines for guests. Additionally, the use of flowers, fish tanks, and bonsai arrangements inside the hotel enhances the energy field and aesthetic appeal. Following the principles of the Five Elements, there is a balance between the generation and inhibition of elements, such as water countering fire and wood promoting earth.

In the lobbies of the Rosewood hotels in Hong Kong and Thailand, the main entrance features a revolving door. The design of the revolving door allows for the circulation of energy while preventing financial luck from flowing out. The lobbies are decorated with marble floors, high ceilings, pearl curtains, champagne gold accents, and wooden embellishments, creating a smooth energy flow and incorporating the elements of feng shui. These design elements symbolize prosperity and growth, creating spacious and bright environments that retain positive energy.
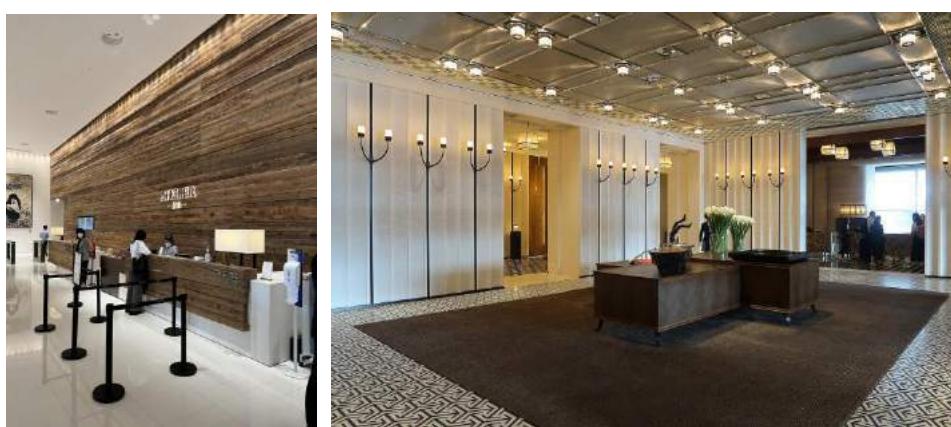
Fig. 6: Rosewood hotels in Hong Kong   *Fig. 7:* Rosewood hotels in Bangkok

Hotel Icon in Hong Kong cleverly utilizes the design of flower beds to avoid having the hotel entrance directly facing the driveway. This design ensures that the internal road leading to the hotel does not exceed the flower bed area between the two-way lanes opposite the hotel. It follows the feng shui principle of avoiding a direct line of sight that passes straight through. Additionally, the seating design in the Green Bar makes clever use of semi-circular arrangements, narrow passages, and a table at the far end to enclose the entrance, allowing the financial luck to remain within the spacious void above.

In the design of Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok, careful consideration is given to the layout of guest entrances, walkways, and sightlines. The positioning of the swimming pool takes advantage of the gaps between the surrounding high-rise buildings, ensuring better air circulation and providing an expansive view.

Fig. 8: Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok

4.1.6 Numerical Preferences

Different countries have preferences or taboos regarding certain numbers, and this is widely reflected in Asian hotels. For example, The hotel Icon in Hong Kong avoids the numbers "13," "14," and "24" in the arrangement of floor buttons in the elevator. This is because the hotel's architectural design does not include floors 3 to 8. However, the height of the 2nd floor is actually much higher than two floors, but it is labeled as the 2nd floor due to the sequence and functional reasons. At the entrance of Sukhothai Hotel in Bangkok, there are 9 Buddha altars, as the number 9 is considered auspicious in Thailand.
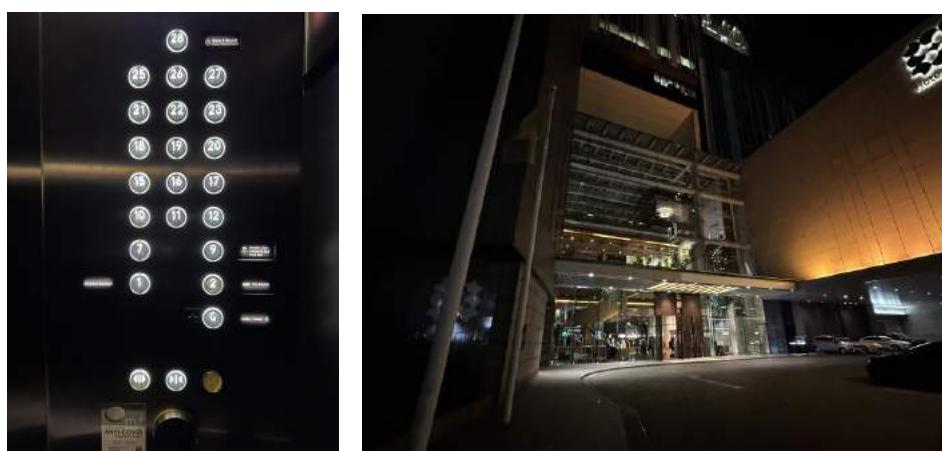
Fig. 9: Hotel Icon in Hong Kong

Fig. 10: Sukhothai Hotel in Bangkok

4.1.7 Room Orientation

In hotels, the orientation of guest rooms is chosen to avoid cemeteries, sources of pollution, and toilets. Additionally, rooms are selected to have ample sunlight and good ventilation. According to Feng Shui, the orientation of a room can influence the fortune of its occupants. Passageways commonly used by guests are designed to avoid direct alignment between doors. As shown in the image, the room doors in the upper right corner of the hotel Icon in Hong Kong are positioned with a displacement of the door frames to minimize this issue.
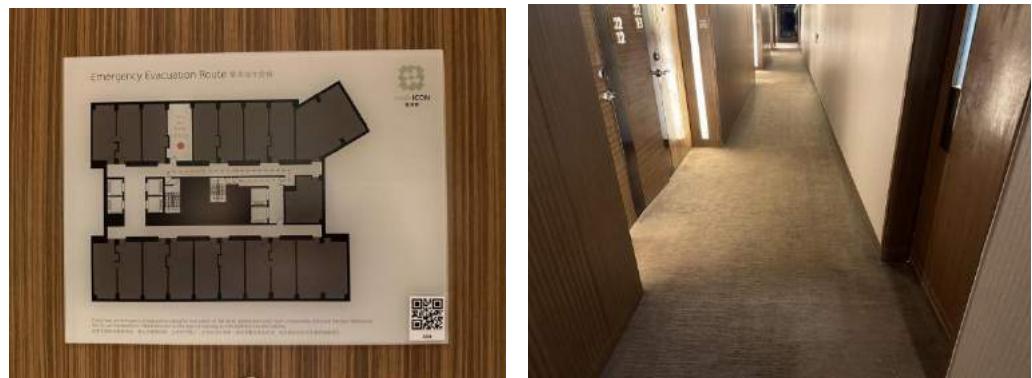
Fig. 11: Hotel Icon in Hong Kong

4.1.8 Interior Decoration

In the lobby of Rosewood Hong Kong, there is a central foyer table with four corners. Each corner is adorned with a yacht model, books, flowers, and an upright picture frame. Additionally, there is a simulated veranda that brings a sense of natural dialogue to the enclosed indoor setting. Furthermore, on the bedside table, there is a shelf displaying a local oil painting album from Hong Kong. The original artwork of one of the paintings is conveniently showcased above the mini-bar, creating a harmonious blend of reality and illusion.

Fig. 12: Rosewood Hong Kong

In the rooms of the hotel Icon in Hong Kong, the rounded design of the corner at the end of the hallway not only provides a visually pleasing and comfortable sense of security but also creates an illusion of a larger space within the room.

Fig. 13: Hotel Icon in Hong Kong

4.1.9 Bathroom Design

According to feng shui beliefs, the positioning of the bathroom can affect the overall energy flow of the room. In Asian hotels, it is common to see bathrooms positioned to avoid directly facing the bed or the entrance. They are also decorated with corresponding feng shui symbols or items to prevent financial loss. The toilet arrangement, especially in the Hotel Icon in Hong Kong, is particularly emphasized. Within the limited space of the restroom, the use of curved glass in the shower area adds a sense of design and maximizes space efficiency compared to a square design. Similarly, at Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok, the glass partition between the toilet, bathtub, and washbasin not only saves on partition thickness but also avoids the feng shui taboo of the toilet directly facing the head of the bed.

*Fig. 14 :*Hotel Icon in Hong Kong   *Fig. 15:* Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok

4.1.10 Color Coordination

In Feng Shui culture, colors are closely related to the Five Elements, and each color represents different elements and characteristics. The selection and combination of colors in Asian hotel designs are highly considered. For example, red represents the Fire element, so it is commonly used in hotel restaurants and bars to create a sense of passion and romance. Additionally, Feng Shui believes that colors can influence the energy field, and some designs reflect the principles of the Five Elements' generation and restraint through color selection. For instance, green represents the Wood element, while red represents the Fire element. It is important for colors to align with the hotel's theme and brand image. For example, The Oriental Mandarin Hotel in Thailand often adopts warm color tones, creating a sense of closeness, warmth, and tranquility for its guests.

Fig. 16: Mandarin Oriental Hotel

4.1.11 Material Selection

In feng shui culture, various materials also represent different elements and characteristics. For example, metal represents the metal element, while wood represents the wood element. Hotels often utilize metal materials in the decoration of their lobbies, restaurants, and other areas to enhance a sense of nobility and grandeur. Feng shui culture encourages the use of the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) to balance the energy in the space. The Banyan Tree Bangkok Hotel and Sukhothai Hotel Bangkok both extensively incorporate colors and materials that correspond to the five elements. For instance, they utilize Thai silk, wooden furniture, metal decorations, and water features, which align with the principles of the five elements. Similarly, The Rosewood Bangkok combines wood and metal materials to create an auspicious and harmonious atmosphere, balancing the energy in the space.

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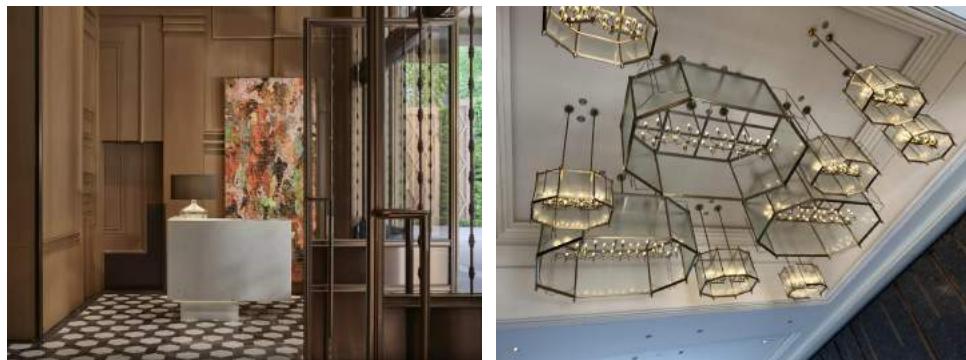
Fig. 17: Rosewood Bangkok

4.1.12 Symbolic Graphics

In feng shui symbolism, squares represent order and structure, serving as the foundation of one's character, while circles represent harmony and maturity, reflecting the way of living. Without squares, the world lacks rules and constraints, while without circles, the world carries excessive burdens and becomes unmanageable. When interacting with others and navigating through life, one should embrace both squareness and roundness, adapting accordingly. The integration of squares and circles symbolizes the harmony between heaven and earth.

The decorations, layout, and furniture of the Banyan Tree Bangkok Hotel reflect the symbolism of squareness and roundness. For example, in the bathrooms, there are round wash basins that correspond to square dressing tables. In the bedrooms, you can find round decorative doors that match square background panels. This use of square and round elements throughout the hotel's design represents the concept of balance and harmony between these two shapes, creating a visually pleasing and harmonious atmosphere for guests.

Fig. 18: Banyan Tree Bangkok

In the Rosewood Hong Kong and Rosewood Bangkok, the Bagua diagram represents different elements and symbols, and their combinations and variations are believed to explain the generation, transformation, and extinction of all things. In the Green restaurant of Hotel Icon, the opposite wall of the green plant wall is the outer wall of the elevator shaft. The decorative strokes of Chinese characters not only beautify the wall but also highlight the hotel's connection to the Chinese character region in Asia. The artwork is called "The Dao Gives Birth to One, One Gives Birth to Two, Two Gives Birth to Three, Three Gives Birth to All Things." Its creator, Hong Qiang, attempts to express the concept of the life cycle of humanity and all things in the world, as well as their interrelation with the trajectory of the universe, through traditional Chinese scroll art and the use of blank space.

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Fig. 19: Rosewood hotel   *Fig. 20:* Hotel Icon in Hong Kong

4.1.13 Lighting and Ventilation

In Feng Shui culture, the flow and distribution of light are also highly important as they can influence the energy flow within a space. Asian hotels often have sufficient windows and open spaces in their guest rooms and public areas to ensure ample sunlight enters the hotel while avoiding harsh light and shadows. The lighting design at Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok takes into consideration the arrangement of light, creating a more balanced and natural distribution and flow of light while avoiding the interplay of strong light and shadows.

Fig. 21: Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok

The guest rooms and public areas of The Rosewood Hong Kong are equipped with ample windows and open spaces to ensure sufficient sunlight and fresh air, which aligns with the Feng Shui principles of natural light and good ventilation. Additionally, the bedside reading lamps in these hotels are designed with offset lighting to avoid harsh glare and enhance light diffraction, providing a greater sense of comfort.

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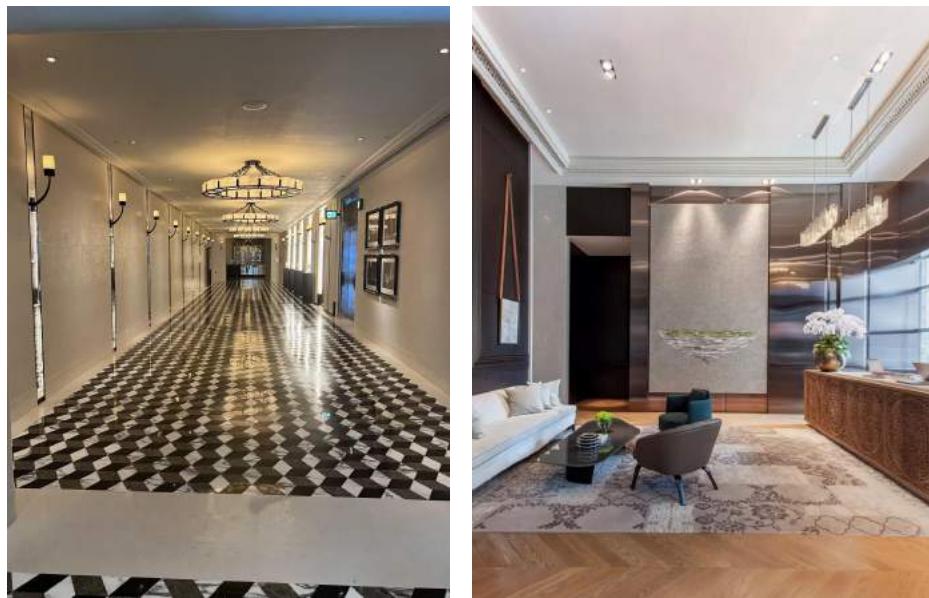
Fig. 22: Rosewood Hong Kong

4.1.14 Animal Symbolism

Elephants are considered auspicious symbols, and the image of bats is widely used in the interior design of the Rosewood hotels, symbolizing good luck. In Chinese culture, peacocks are regarded as beautiful, noble, and auspicious birds, representing virtues, glory, and nobility. They are often used to decorate royal buildings and objects to showcase the authority and status of the emperor.

Fig. 23: Rosewood Hong Kong

4.1.15 Plant Applications

The design of the green plant wall in the lobby of The Hotel Icon in Hong Kong starts from the check-in counter background, extends across the ballroom floor, and connects with the background wall of the Green restaurant in the lobby. It is a major highlight of the hotel's design, where the large open space and extensive greenery create a tranquil and comfortable atmosphere in the urban setting. Similarly, the abundance of lotus ponds in the gardens of The Sukhothai Hotel in Bangkok is also a proud and distinctive feature of the hotel.

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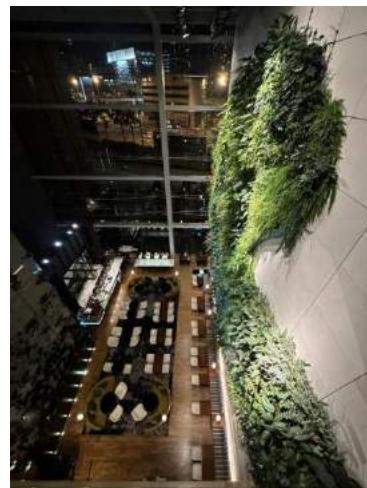
Fig. 24: Hotel Icon in Hong Kong

Fig. 25: Sukhothai Hotel in Bangkok

4.1.16 Artwork and Decorations

Hotels choose meaningful artwork and decorations that can enhance the ambiance and auspiciousness of the space. In Feng Shui, it is believed that a city, a village, a courtyard, a building, a residence, a room... all represent a Tai Chi, just at different levels. The decorations inside the rooms of The Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok, including the design of doors and windows, feature many Tai Chi patterns, reflecting the concept of balancing Yin and Yang and achieving energy equilibrium in Feng Shui.

Fig. 26: Banyan Tree Hotel in Bangkok

Therefore, this study has summarized a total of 16 open-ended codes, namely location, architectural design, entrance, environmental arrangement, space layout, numerical preferences, room orientation, interior decoration, bathroom design, color coordination, material selection, symbolic graphics, lighting and ventilation, animal symbolism, plant application, and artwork and decorations.

4.2 Encoding Basis

Before conducting principal axis encoding and selective encoding, it is necessary to clarify the direction of encoding for further analysis.

Therefore, it is important to review existing literature and identify the basis for encoding.

Feng Shui is an ancient Chinese philosophy that emphasizes the relationship between the environment and individuals, believing that the environment has a profound impact on people's lives and careers. In Asian culture, Feng Shui is widely applied in architecture and interior design, especially in the hotel and residential fields.

Throughout history, many phenomena cannot be explained by scientific means, leading people to engage in psychological suggestion and promotion. It is widely believed that a favorable

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Feng Shui environment can bring good luck and prosperity, while negative Feng Shui can bring misfortune and adversity. Ancient Chinese architecture, for instance, evolved from such psychological development (Xu Jianghua, 2012b). Therefore, in hotel design, Feng Shui is considered an important element to ensure that guests can rest and relax in a favorable environment, and it can also have positive psychological effects on the smooth operation of the hotel.

Furthermore, Feng Shui reflects people's pursuit of balance and harmony. It emphasizes the interaction between individuals and the natural environment, suggesting that only when the two achieve balance and harmony can people attain success and happiness (Liu Peilin, 1995). Therefore, in hotel design, Feng Shui is regarded as a factor for achieving balance and harmony, ensuring that guests can spend their time in a comfortable, peaceful, and harmonious environment.

Feng Shui theory is deeply influenced by the philosophical concepts of the "Book of Changes" (Zhou Yi). It is said that during the Jin Dynasty, Guo Pu wrote in his work "Burial Book": "Burial is about harnessing the vitality. When the Qi rides the wind, it disperses; when it encounters boundaries like water, it stops. The ancients gathered it to prevent dispersal, and directed it to create stops. Therefore, it is called Feng Shui. The principles of Feng Shui prioritize water and include the influence of wind." From this, it can be understood that Feng Shui involves both the aspects of "Qi" and "form". Through long-term academic discussions and developments, two major theoretical branches of Feng Shui have emerged: the School of Qi (Li Qi Pai) and the School of Form (Xing Shi Pai) (Qin Shufeng, 2006).

The School of Qi primarily focuses on the study of Yin and Yang, the Five Elements, the Eight Trigrams, and the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, which are important theoretical systems in ancient Chinese philosophy. Yin and Yang refer to two opposing but interdependent forces in the universe, while the Five Elements

represent the five fundamental elements in the universe: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. In Feng Shui culture, Yin and Yang and the Five Elements are widely applied in the study of the environment, architecture, and human destiny.

The School of Form involves the study of five important elements: Qi, Wind-Water, Four Symbols, Form, and Orientation. So far, scholars both domestically and internationally have not reached a universally satisfactory conclusion regarding the concept of "Qi". However, a relatively authoritative modern physics perspective suggests that the essence of "Qi" is subatomic particles and their fields. This theory bears some similarity to the ancient Chinese understanding of "formation when gathered and dissipation when dispersed" (Sheng Jin, 2010). The "Burial Book" asserts that the accumulation of "vital Qi" must occur in an ideal location, where the Qi disperses with the wind and stops at boundaries formed by water. This implies the reliance on two primary conditions: concealing the wind and gathering the water, as the combination of hidden wind and gathered water brings vitality.

The theory of Four Symbols originates from the historical development of Chinese astronomy's 28 constellations irregularly composed of asterisms. The sky is divided into these 28 asterisms, which are further grouped into four symbols. Each symbol consists of seven asterisms, and they are divided based on their shapes and directions in the sky: the Azure Dragon in the east, the Vermilion Bird in the south, the White Tiger in the west, and the Black Tortoise in the north. The dragon and tiger are also important core concepts in Feng Shui culture. The dragon is a mythical creature in traditional Chinese culture, symbolizing power, nobility, and good fortune, while the tiger symbolizes bravery, strength, and dignity. In Feng Shui culture, the dragon and tiger are often used to study the energetic field of the environment and architecture, and there is a saying "Left Azure Dragon, Right White Tiger, Front Vermilion Bird, Back Black Tortoise" (Feng Xianwei, 2019b).

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Yang Junsong, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), developed a comprehensive analysis method for the Xingshi school, which is based on the understanding of landscapes, including the contours of the terrain, the flow of rivers, and geographic structures. He focused on the shape of mountains, mountain ranges, the direction of rivers, and the relationship between mountains and water. Yang Junsong's analysis emphasized five geographical factors: Longmai (dragon veins), Sha (sand), Shui (water), Xue (caves), and Fangwei (directions). By combining these five geographical factors with the principles of Qi, Feng-Shui, the Four Symbols, and Situations, he established a systematic analysis method for the Xingshi school. This method has evolved into what we commonly refer to as Feng Shui layout, which is widely applied in various fields such as residential, commercial, and public spaces to adjust the energy field and improve human destiny and well-being. In the context of Feng Shui culture, the core categories can be summarized as Yin and Yang, the Five Elements, the Eight Trigrams, the Four Symbols, Situations, and Directions. In this study, we will specifically examine five hotels in Bangkok and Hong Kong based on these six categories.

4.3 Axial Coding

Based on the aforementioned categories and open coding, this study further classified them into the following axial codes:

"Seeking harmony and responding in unison": This phrase signifies the importance of working together and pursuing common goals. It emphasizes the need for emotional alignment and resonance among individuals when striving for shared objectives. Only through mutual support and encouragement can collective motivation and confidence be stimulated. Particularly in Chinese culture, there is an emphasis on the relationship between the individual and the collective, believing that only when each person considers the interests of the collective can common goals and benefits be achieved. Therefore, Asian hotels embody the traits of mutual assistance, unity, cooperation, and win-win outcomes.

Water as wealth: Asian hotels often use water and greenery for decoration, which corresponds to a fundamental principle in Feng Shui: "Mountains govern people, and water governs wealth." This is because water is related to wealth. In places that attach importance to Feng Shui, such as Huizhou architecture, the eaves are inclined towards the interior to allow rainwater to flow into the house, symbolizing the belief that "fertile water should not flow into someone else's field." Water not only embellishes the external environment of hotels but also represents circulation. By engaging in more communication with people and exploring the world, one's fortune naturally improves, as symbolized by the expression "letting the water find its own course."

Frugality: Many Asian hotels practice ecological conservation and sustainable development. For example, they consider energy efficiency and environmental friendliness when selecting decorative materials. Additionally, they reduce environmental pollution by choosing eco-friendly materials for guest rooms. These practices reflect the values of frugality, cherishing resources, rational utilization, and environmental consciousness in traditional Asian culture. This value system emphasizes the rational use of resources, environmental protection, and the harmony between individuals and collectives, individuals and nature, and interpersonal relationships.

Extremely Inauspicious: In the study of feng shui, examples of extremely inauspicious dwellings are often characterized by unconventional and irregular shapes, with uneven corners in the house. This concept originates from the "Book of Changes", where any extreme and drastic changes in hexagrams are considered dangerous. In contrast, Asian hotels tend to exhibit curved and symmetrical designs, and they emphasize maintaining a balanced relationship with their customers, providing a welcoming and hospitable experience. This reflects the Asian value of avoiding extremes and allowing room for flexibility in life.

Not Bullying Others: The design of Asian hotels reflects the respect for the guests' personality,

dignity, and privacy. This is because Asians have always emphasized interpersonal relationships and social order, highlighting equality and respect among individuals. Only on the basis of equality can harmonious social and interpersonal relationships be established, which also reflects the values of respect, humility, etiquette, and human care in Asian traditional culture. Additionally, "not bullying others" also reflects traditional virtues such as benevolence, loyalty, courage, and honesty.

Harmonizing with the Environment: The architectural designs of Asian hotels often adhere to local environmental and planning requirements. This demonstrates a pragmatist worldview that emphasizes making the most appropriate decisions and taking action based on the current situation and environment, rather than rigidly adhering to fixed principles or beliefs. Furthermore, Asian hotels emphasize practicality and efficiency, striving to make optimal decisions and take actions within the shortest possible time. This reflects the values of adaptability, flexibility, and innovation, as it requires people to quickly adapt to changing environments and adopt the best course of action.

4.4 Selective Coding

Based on axial coding, the following five selective codes are derived:

Respect for the natural environment: Asian hotels typically adhere to the principles of feng shui in their architectural design and decoration to create a harmonious atmosphere with the natural environment. For example, factors such as natural light, wind direction, and water flow are taken into consideration in the layout and decoration of the hotel to create a comfortable and health-promoting environment. The distinctive architecture of Rosewood Bangkok and the lotus canal at Sukhothai Hotel in Bangkok exemplify the reverence for the natural environment.

Respect for traditional culture: Asian hotels often incorporate traditional cultural elements in their design and services to showcase the local cultural characteristics and historical heritage. Traditional building materials and handicrafts are used in the architecture and decoration of the hotel. The octagonal and bat motifs in Rosewood hotel, the Thai silk wallpaper and the nine Buddha altars at the entrance of Sukhothai Hotel, all demonstrate respect for traditional culture.

Emphasis on harmony and balance: Asian hotels typically prioritize the harmony and balance of the hotel environment. Sharp angles and straight lines are avoided in the layout and decoration of the hotel, and instead, soft curves and arcs are used to create a more harmonious environment. Examples include the design of washroom facades in the Hotel Icon in Hong Kong and the decorative elements of yin-yang balance and tai chi in Banyan Tree Bangkok, all embodying the emphasis on harmony and balance.

Respect for guest needs: Asian hotels typically focus on meeting the needs and experiences of guests by providing personalized services and customized experiences. Attention is paid to guest privacy, safety, and offering personalized choices in hotel services.

Emphasis on destiny: Asian hotels usually value the influence of destiny and fortune in creating an environment that is conducive to the success and well-being of guests. In the layout and decoration of the hotel, inauspicious symbols and colors are avoided, and instead, auspicious colors and elements are used to enhance the fortune and luck of guests. Examples include the lighting ceremony and decorative items representing yin-yang balance at Banyan Tree Bangkok, as well as the peacock, bat, and octagonal motifs at Rosewood Hong Kong, and the elevator numbers at Hotel Icon in Hong Kong. All of these exemplify the emphasis on destiny.

For the specific coding process, please refer to Table 1

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Table 1: coding process

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
location	Seeking harmony and responding in unison	Respect for the natural environment
architectural design		
entrance	Water as wealth	
Environmental arrangement		
space layout	Harmonizing with the Environment	Respect for guest needs
numerical preferences		
room orientation		
interior decoration	Frugality	Respect for traditional culture
bathroom design		
color coordination		
material selection	Extremely Inauspicious	Emphasis on harmony and balance
symbolic graphic s		
lighting and ventilation		
animal symbolism	Not Bullying Others	Emphasis on destiny
plant application		
artwork and decorations.		

V.   DISCUSSION

The design, architecture, and decoration of Asian hotel paradigms fully incorporate the principles of Feng Shui culture, showcasing the concept of harmonious coexistence with nature through the form, colors, materials, and decorations of the hotel buildings. The architecture of the hotels takes into account factors such as natural light, ventilation, and natural elements to allow guests to experience a sense of nature even indoors. The decorations also consider the symbolic meaning of Feng Shui culture, using elements such as stone and water features to create a natural and comfortable ambiance. The contemporary Feng Shui culture's ideas of "advocating nature" and "unity of heaven and humanity" have important influences on regulating human moral behavior, coordinating the relationship between humans and nature, and establishing a holistic ecological view that emphasizes the importance of humans, nature, and society (Wang, 2011). Moral ethics is one of the important contents in Feng Shui culture (Mizuguchi, 2011), and it is regarded as an important guarantee for human destiny and happiness. It emphasizes that humans should respect nature, respect others, respect tradition, and pursue a harmonious, balanced, and beautiful life (Ma, 2012). Therefore, by observing the manifestation of Feng Shui culture in hotels, we can summarize the values of the Asian hotel paradigm as "respecting the natural environment, respecting traditional culture, emphasizing harmony and balance, respecting guest needs, and valuing fate." These values align with the moral ethics of society and reflect the cultural values and

behavioral guidelines of Asian hotels. The application of Feng Shui culture in Asian hotels not only embodies the cultural heritage of Asian traditional culture but also makes the hotels more in line with human needs and the requirements of the natural environment. Through the application of Feng Shui culture, the principles of symbolism and implication are aesthetically packaged through the presentation of the hotels, utilizing the aesthetics of life and the essence of moral culture. Asian hotels integrate the scientific proposition of the unity of heaven, earth, and humanity into human-centered design, reflecting the humanistic care of hotels and providing guests with a more comfortable and harmonious accommodation experience.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND OUTLOOK

Although the observational method is straightforward and simple, there are also some limitations. For example, there may be observation biases, and the results may be influenced by subjective factors of the observers. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these issues when using the observational method and take corresponding measures to reduce biases and errors. In this study, multiple interpretations and cross-comparisons of the results were conducted by the members to ensure the objectivity of the observational findings.

Furthermore, there is debate over whether Hong Kong and Bangkok can represent Asian culture and whether Asian culture exists within a common framework. It may be necessary to further expand the regional scope of empirical research in future studies to ensure the broad applicability of these conclusions. Additionally, before the widespread dissemination and application of Feng Shui theory, it is necessary to establish a theoretical conceptual model for the application of Feng Shui. By utilizing relevant knowledge and existing techniques, a structured theoretical framework for Feng Shui could be established, which may help enhance the application of Feng Shui. Therefore, it is possible to expand the development of scales or conduct quantitative research to ensure the reliability and validity of the model.

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Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Youth in Times of Crisis: A Study on Job and Financial Insecurity Post-COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on various aspects of social and economic life. One area that has been particularly affected is the mental health of young people. This study aims to investigate the factors that contribute to mental illness in youth in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. A sample of 300 youths participated in the study by completing a questionnaire that was developed based on the YoungMinds Malaysia initiative. The questionnaire explored the perceptions of young people on various factors that can contribute to mental illness, including job and financial concerns. The study findings shed light on the unique mental health perceptions of youth in comparison to other age groups. The study highlights the need for targeted intervention strategies to address the mental health issues faced by youth, particularly in the areas of job and financial insecurity. The findings have significant implications for policymakers and mental health professionals in Malaysia and beyond.

Keywords: mental health, youth, covid-19, malaysia, pandemic.

Classification: JEL Code: K32, L94, L95

Language: English

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on various aspects of social and economic life. One area that has been particularly affected is the mental health of young people. This study aims to investigate the factors that contribute to mental illness in youth in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. A sample of 300 youths participated in the study by completing a questionnaire that was developed based on the YoungMinds Malaysia initiative. The questionnaire explored the perceptions of young people on various factors that can contribute to mental illness, including job and financial concerns. The study findings shed light on the unique mental health perceptions of youth in comparison to other age groups. The study highlights the need for targeted intervention strategies to address the mental health issues faced by youth, particularly in the areas of job and financial insecurity. The findings have significant implications for policymakers and mental health professionals in Malaysia and beyond.

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I. INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the world was rocked by the existence of a virus known as Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The virus was first detected and diagnosed in the Chinese city of Wuhan (Sajed & Amgain, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) has labelled the virus a pandemic as a result of its spread. Malaysia, like the rest of the world, has been dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more than two years, the government has taken a number of steps to halt the spread of COVID-19. Beginning 1st April 2022, Malaysia has transitioned to the Endemic Phase following the effectiveness of public health prevention and control measures by implementing the National Recovery Plan, with the MCO Phase Transition enforced only in stages at this moment (MKN, 2022). This implementation necessitates a few steps, such as the ability to not wear facial masks in public open spaces, as well as allowing no limit to the number of ceremonies that can be held. As a result, youths must be astute in their adaptation to the current situation. COVID-19's presence, which appears to have no end, has had a tremendous impact on every young person's physical, emotional, and social well-being, as well as affecting their everyday norms in life. The Ministry of Health (MOH) shared a set of relaxed standard operating procedures (SOPs) that would take place in the country effective 1st May 2022 (Sunday). This is part of the country's transition to the endemic phase. In this article, HRO will focus on the generic updates applicable to the general public in terms of the wearing of facial masks, maintaining physical distance, and practicing good hygiene, as well as a list of prohibited activities.

II. MENTAL HEALTH

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health refers to an individual's ability to manage the stresses of daily life, work effectively, and contribute to society (World Health Organization, n.d.). However, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous challenges to young people who are just starting their careers, as they struggle to navigate the job market and prepare for the demands of the workforce (Mat Wajar & Hamzah, 2020). The ability of young people to respond to stress is variable, and excessive stress can result in feelings of isolation, sleep disturbances, heightened anxiety, and other physical symptoms that have an indirect impact on their daily lives (Subramaniam, 2015; Johari & Ahmad, 2019).

Youth are the backbone of society, and they will become the future leaders who shape the nation. As such, it is essential to take their mental health seriously and not dismiss it based on their age. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to the mental health of young people in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. LITERATURE

3.1 Factors that cause mental health disorders

The unstable economic situation has made it challenging for young people to secure a stable source of income, which has led them to turn to the gig economy for more flexible work options. However, the gig economy often lacks the benefits of traditional jobs, such as predictable hours, wages, and promotion opportunities, which contribute to financial stress and ultimately lead to mental health issues among youth (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). In addition, family happiness is a critical factor in the emotional well-being of children and adolescents. Sham (2005) found that a happy home environment promotes stable adolescent emotions, whereas an unhappy family environment can disrupt teenage emotions, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Adolescents are particularly susceptible to intense feelings of isolation (Labrague et al., 2020). A sense of loneliness is a common indicator of stress in students (Wright, 1967). Zhang et al. (2020) found that students were experiencing sleep disturbances during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can lead to post-traumatic stress symptoms (Liu et al., 2020), making it difficult for them to confide in others about their problems. The lack of social support exacerbates this problem (Son et al., 2020).

This study aims to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the mental health of Malaysian youth, particularly children and teenagers, by identifying the factors that contribute to their mental health during the pandemic.

IV. METHODOLOGY

In March and April 2022, a survey was conducted among 300 young people who follow YoungMinds Malaysia's online initiatives. To collect large amounts of data, a questionnaire was used as a data-gathering device (Ismail & Al Bahri, 2019). According to Pranatawijaya et al. (2019), one way to use questionnaires over the web is by creating a Google Form questionnaire, which eliminates the need to print and distribute physical questionnaires, reducing costs and saving time. Therefore, a Google Form questionnaire was used in this study to obtain feedback from the respondents. The questionnaire for this study consists of four sections, including the demographics section and Parts A, B, and C. Part A covers the demographics of the respondents, while Parts B and C delve into the factors that influence the mental health of young people in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of online surveys has become increasingly popular due to their convenience and accessibility (Kessler & Luedtke, 2019). This method of data collection has proven to be effective, efficient, and cost-effective (Tehseen, Ramayah, & Sajilan, 2017). Furthermore, web-based surveys are capable of reaching a wider range of respondents, as they do not require physical contact or travel (Heerwegh, 2017).

V.   STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the section on the demographics of respondents indicate that females predominate in this study, with 150 (51%) female respondents compared to 149 (49%) male respondents. With approximately 300 respondents between January 2022 and March 2022, the Young Minds Malaysia programme represents the largest proportion of respondents for the study. Based on the platform used during the study, it was found that the majority of respondents preferred Zoom with 120 (40%), followed by YouTube with 100 (33%), and Facebook Live with 80 (27%).

Part A: Factors in the Problem of Obtaining a Permanent Job

Is there an effect between the problem of obtaining a permanent job and depression?

Table 1 displays the mean factor scores on Youth Workers regarding the influence of job security on mental health. The findings reveal that young people with permanent employment have a mean score of 4.235 (SD = 0.769), while those who have not secured permanent employment have a slightly higher mean score of 4.27 (SD = 0.787). On the other hand, young people who do not work have a significantly lower mean score of 2.46 (SD = 1.41). These findings align with the results of a study conducted by Son et al. (2020), in which obtaining a job was found to interfere with the mental health of students. Moreover, by demographics, students, females, and those with poor financial conditions are more vulnerable to mental health symptoms (Labrague et al., 2020). The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased psychological distress among adolescents due to economic consequences, changes in academic activities, difficulties adapting to online distance learning methods, and uncertainty about academic and career prospects. The evidence presented in Section A of this study suggests a link between unemployment and depression, which highlights the urgent need for increased attention to detect and provide intervention strategies to combat the rising rate of mental health problems among young people.

Table 1: Mean factor scores on Youth Workers

Item	Section	Mean	Standa rd deviati on
1.	Youth with permanent employment	4.235	0.769
2.	Youth No permanent jobs	4.27	0.787
3.	Youth who do not work	2.46	1.41

Part B: Living Arrangements

Is there an effect between living arrangements and depression?

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has led to policies of exceptional physical isolation in many nations, including Malaysia. The implementation of work-from-home regulations and virtual meetings has had a significant impact on businesses, and individuals continue to suffer psychologically due to economic implications, limits on social activities, and prolonged seclusion in their homes. Housing conditions have been shown to have a significant impact on various aspects of adolescent mental health, although this link may be obscured by their social network. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the interaction between living arrangements and social networks and their impact on the mental health of Malaysian adolescents. Table 4 displays the mean factor scores on Living Arrangement. According to the results, young people who receive full support from their families have the highest mean score of 4.005 (SD = 0.926). Meanwhile, those who take care of sick family members have a mean score of 2.475 (SD = 1.120). Adolescents who adjust their routines back to normal life have a mean score of 3.625 (SD = 1.192), and those from

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shattered families or with no family have the lowest mean score of 2.433 (SD = 1.092). The average adolescent agrees that lacking a family or having a fractured family contributes to mental health difficulties. The evidence presented in Section B of this study suggests that there is a link between living arrangements and depression. Adolescents who lack family support or come from broken families may be more vulnerable to mental health problems, highlighting the need for increased attention to support vulnerable young people during the ongoing pandemic.

Table 2: Mean factor scores on Living Arrangement

Item	Section	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Youth get full support from family	4.005	0.926
2.	Youth take care of sick family members	2.475	1.120
3.	Youth adjusting their routines back to normal life	3.625	1.192
4.	Youth from no family or broken Family	2.433	1.092

Part C: Income Range
Is there an effect between income and depression?

The relationship between income and depression was investigated in several studies included in a meta-analysis, which found that individuals with low incomes had a significantly higher risk of depression (1.81) than those with higher incomes. Low household income is also associated with a higher risk of lifetime mental disorders and suicide attempts, and a decrease in household income increases the risk of incident mental disorders. Table 5 summarizes the findings of the time management factor. According to the results, young people from lower-income families (B40) with a monthly household income of less than RM4,850 have the lowest mental assessment mean score of 2.975 (SD = 0.859), as shown in Table 3. Young people from middle-class households with a monthly household income between RM4,851 and RM10,970 (M40) have a slightly lower mean score of 3.445 (SD = 1.068). In contrast, young people from upper-class households with a monthly household income exceeding RM10,971 (T20) have a higher assessment of mental wellbeing with a mean score of 3.805 (SD = 1.965). The results of the questionnaire also revealed that young people from lower-income families (B40) were significantly more depressed in the post-pandemic phase due to the country's economic challenges, such as higher inflation and lower currency values compared to other countries (Ahad et al., 2020). Thus, the findings of Section C suggest that there is a link between income and depression, emphasizing the need for policymakers and mental health practitioners to provide support and interventions to help vulnerable young people from lower-income families.

Table 3: Mean score against income range

Item	Section	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Lower-income household income is below RM4,850 per month (B40)	2.975	0.859
2.	Middle-class household income is between RM4,851 and RM10,970 per month (M40)	3.445	1.068
3.	Upper-class household income exceeds RM10,971 a month (T20)	3.805	1.965

Part D: Social Media Factors

Is there an effect between social media and depression?

Table 4 summarizes the findings on the factors affecting social media time management, based on the responses from the survey participants. The mean factor score for youth who use 1-5 hours of social media per day is (M=2.975, SD=1.859) while for youth who use 5-10 hours or more of social media per day, the mean factor score is (M=1.445, SD=0.068). On the other hand, youth who do not use social media have a mean factor score of (M=3.975, SD=0.965). The results of the survey revealed that even the youths who used social media for the most hours per day were the most susceptible to mental health issues. These findings are consistent with a study by Ahad et al. (2020) which showed that excessive use of social media is associated with mental health problems. The excessive use of social media can result in anxiety,

depression, and low self-esteem. Moreover, excessive use of social media can also lead to addiction, which can further exacerbate mental health problems. Thus, the results in Section D suggest a correlation between social media use and depression. In summary, the findings suggest that social media use, income, living arrangements, and employment status are all significant factors that influence the mental health of young people in Malaysia during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial to provide intervention strategies to address the mental health issues faced by young people, particularly those who are from lower-income families, have unstable employment, live in fractured families, or use social media excessively. These interventions could include providing mental health support services, creating job opportunities, improving social support networks, and promoting responsible use of social media.

Table 4: Mean factor scores on Social media Use

Item	Section	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Youth using 1–5 hours of daily social media	2.975	1.859
2.	Youth using 5–10 hours or more of daily social media	1.445	0.068
3.	Youth with no social media	3.975	0.965

VI.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has identified four primary causes of mental health issues among adolescents during the post-pandemic period. These causes are the inability to obtain a permanent position, living conditions, income range, and social media usage management. The findings suggest that financial resources, employment opportunities, and living arrangements significantly influence the mental health of youth in Malaysia. The majority of the respondents were male and female youths who participated in YoungMinds Malaysia's Mental Health programme, which provided support for the items on each studied aspect. The results indicate an urgent need to address the mental health issues faced by young people, particularly those who come from lower-income families, have

unstable employment, live in fractured families, or use social media excessively. One recommendation for reducing stress during the post-COVID-19 pandemic period is for the government to actively host job fairs for young people and promote the growth of the gig economy. Additionally, further research can investigate additional relevant factors that influence the mental health of young people.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of addressing the mental health challenges faced by young people during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. It is crucial to provide appropriate interventions and support services to promote the mental well-being of young people and prevent long-term mental health issues.

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The Anarchic Growth of the Central Region of Mexico. Current and Future Consequences

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SUMMARY

This is an essay on the consequences of the indiscriminate growth of the central region of Mexico. It is a mixed research, in which the qualitative and quantitative approaches interact with the objectives, on the one hand, to facilitate the understanding of the serious multifaceted situation of the inhabitants and the ecological imbalance of this region, and on the other to propose a drastic paradigm shift in the policy of human settlements and the fight against corruption that is ultimately the root cause of the problem at hand. The procedural part includes statistical data on population, extension, and population density of seven entities in the region: Mexico City, and the States of Mexico, Tlaxcala, Puebla, Querétaro, Hidalgo and Morelos. The propositional part is based on the methodology called "creative imagination" of Giambattista Vico, an Italian philosopher who lived five centuries ago, but whose thought is still valid today. The results of the research were based on the systems approach and the theory of constraints supported respectively by Fritjof Capra and Eliyahu Goldratt.

Keyexpressions: population density, systemic approach, theory of constraints, geographic region, undesirable effects.

Classification: JEL Code: O18, Q56, R11

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document has been written with unease. Acknowledging the severity of the outsized growth of the country's geographic center and the lack of awareness of it on the part of past and current decision-makers is a powerful motivator to think pessimistically. Pessimism, when it is based on reality, ceases to be pessimism, and becomes realism.

When the leaders of people had a holistic view of the circumstances and acted based on a global long-term vision, great civilizations and powerful empires developed, as happened at some stage of their history with the Romans, Japanese, English, Incas, Mayas, or North Americans among others (Meadwods, at. al 2004).

Unfortunately, all too often this overall vision has been lost in countries such as ours that have not reached the necessary political maturity, and governmental, business, and social decisions have been taken only to achieve narrow purposes or to solve problems limited to local and temporary interests. This absence of a comprehensive long-term vision, together with other aspects in which corruption stands out, has been the cause of many socio-economic situations that are very difficult to resolve.

II. THE CASE OF THE CENTRAL REGIÓN OF MEXICO

The centrality of decisions and the narrow vision of development for several centuries have reached the point where there may be no turning back or, at the very least, their amendment will involve a great deal of effort in the long term, and a great deal of economic resources and sacrifice of communities that must be displaced.

We have narrowed down the geographical area to the entities that have been most affected by the growth. We have used some diagrams and statistical data to facilitate the explanation of the problematic core.

Figure 1: Geographic location of the region under study in the Mexican Republic Source: Authors' own elaboration of the identification of the entities under study based on a map of the free textbooks

The states under study occupy the northeastern part of Mexico City, with the exception of the state of Morelos, which is located to the south, and the state of Mexico, which largely surrounds it.

Table 1: Population of the period 1970-2020 for each entity in the region under study

State	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
México	3,833,185	7,564,335	9,815,795	13,096,686	15,175,862	16,992,418
Ciudad de México	6,874,165	8,831,079	8,235,744	8,605,239	8,851,080	9,209,944
Puebla	250,822	3,347,685	4,126,101	5,076,686	5,779,829	6,583,278
Hidalgo	1,193,845	1,547,493	1,888,366	2,235,591	2,665,018	3,082,841
Querétaro	485,523	739,605	1,051,235	1,404,306	1,827,937	2,368,467
Tlaxcala	420,638	556,597	761,277	962,646	1,169,936	1,342.977
Morelos	616,119	947,089	1,195,059	1,555,296	1,777,227	1,971,520
sumas	13,674,297	23,533,883	27,073,577	32,936,450	37,246,889	41,551,445

Source: Authors' own elaboration with data from INEGI (2015)

Table 2: Data as of 2025 on population density by entity in the region under study

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Code	Federal entity	Area Km2	Total population (2010)	Density as of 2010	Population as of 2020	Density to 2020	Projection to 2025	Density to 2025
13	Hidalgo	20,856	2,665,018	128	3,082,841	148	3,236,983	155
15	México	22,333	15,175,862	680	16,992,418	761	17,842,039	799
9	Ciudad de México	1,484	8,851,080	5,964	9,209,944	6,206	9,670,441	6,516
17	Morelos	4,892	1,777,227	363	1,971,520	403	2,070,096	423
29	Tlaxcala	3,997	1,169,936	293	1,342,977	336	1,410,126	353
22	Querétaro	11,658	1,827,937	157	2,368,467	203	2,486,890	213
21	Puebla	34,251	5,779,829	169	6,583,278	192	6,912,442	202
Total		99,471	37,246,889	374	41,551,445	418	43,629,017	439

Source: Authors' own elaboration of the calculation of the projection with data from INEGI (2020)

By 2025 there would be around 44 million inhabitants in the region under study. If the number of square kilometers occupied by the 7 states is a little less than 100,000, that means that about one-third of the total population lives in one-twentieth of the territory. If there are no significant changes in population growth, development policies and deconcentration plans, by the middle of this decade (2020) we would be around 44 million inhabitants in the region.

Below is an optimistic, conservative and pessimistic extrapolation of the population situation for 2025:

Table 3: Population forecast to 2025 of the región under study

State	Population as of 2020	Population as of 2025		
		Pessimisti forecast	*Conservative forecast*	*Optimisticforecast*
Hidalgo	3,082,841	3,391,125	3,236,983	3,144,498
México	16,992,418	18,691,660	17,842,039	17,332,266
Ciudad de México	9,209,944	10,130,938	9,670,441	9,394,143
Morelos	1,971,520	2,168,672	2,070,096	2,010,950
Tlaxcala	1,342,977	1,477,275	1,410,126	1,369,837
Querétaro	2,368,467	2,605,314	2,486,890	2,415,836
Puebla	6,583,278	7,241,606	6,912,442	6,714,944
	41,551,445	45,706,590	43,629,017	42,382,474

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on INEGI data as of 2020

Table 4: Projection of population density by metropolitan area to 2025

Metropolitanarea	Km. cuadrados	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	densitybyr Km²/ZM (2020)	DensitybyKm²/ZM (2025)
ZM de Pachuca	1,196.50	276,512	330,838	375,022	438,692	512,196	560,419	618,341	649,258	517	543
ZM de Toluca	2,203.20	1,061,065	1,272,301	1,471,146	1,633,052	1,936,126	2,106,473	2,317,052	2,432,905	1,052	1,104
ZM de Puebla-Tlaxcala	2,392.40	1,735,657	2,016,775	2,220,533	2,470,206	2,728,790	2,958,485	3,199,850	3,359,843	1,338	1,404

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ZM del Valle de México	7,866.10	15,563,795	17,297,539	18,396,677	19,239,910	20,116,842	21,403,089	22,496,468	23,621,291	2,860	3,003
ZM de Querétaro	2,053.40	579,597	706,566	816,481	950,828	1,097,025	1,198,304	1,321,039	1,387,091	643	676
ZM de Cuernavaca	1,189.90	549,998	685,896	753,510	802,371	924,964	992,520	1,075,577	1,129,356	904	949
Sumas	16,901.50	19,766,624	22,309,915	24,033,369	25,535,059	27,315,943	29,219,289	31,028,325	32,579,743	1,836	1,928

Source: Authors' own elaboration of the calculation of densities and the projection to 2025 with data from INEGI (2020)

Totalpopulationbystate. 2015

Mapa 1.1 | Población total por entidad federativa, 2015

Población (habitantes)
- 700 000 - 1 000 000
- 1 000 001 - 2 000 000
- 2 000 001 - 4 000 000
- 4 000 001 - 6 000 000
- 6 000 001 - 9 000 000
- > 9 000 000
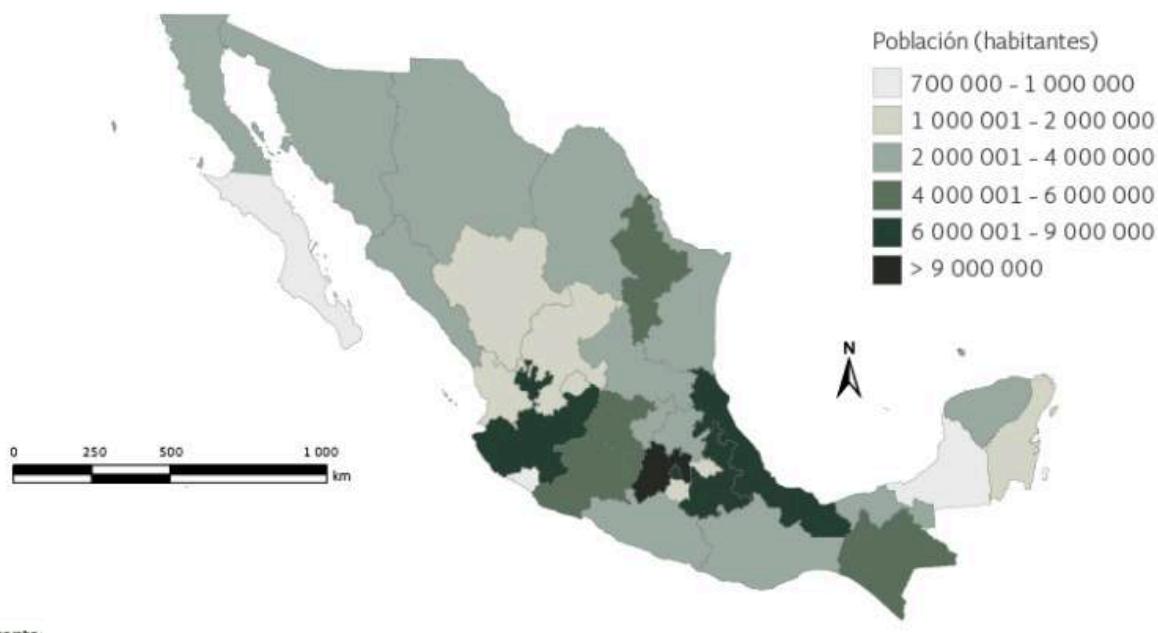
Fuente:
Elaboración propia con datos de:
INEGI. *Encuesta Intercensal 2015*. INEGI. México. 2015.

Source: INEGI. Intercensal Survey 2015)

Figure 2: Total population by state

It is important to note, the number of inhabitants of the 6 metropolitan areas in 2020 was 31 million in an area of 17 thousand square kilometers (in round figures). This means that less than one percent (0.0085) of the national territory was inhabited by 25 percent of the country's total population. This is an incredible figure for any citizen of a country that understands that growth is not synonymous with development. The situation will not improve by 2025.

In an exercise of authenticity unrelated to political or economic interests, this region cannot be considered, as has been the case until recently, as one of the most prosperous regions in the country. Paradoxical conception according to the reference factors.

If we consider economic factors, job options, social movement, housing development, commercial alternatives, opportunities for entrepreneurs, formal education, varios services and other similar factors, it is reasonable to think that growth is positive and that should continue on the same path.

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However, when other aspects are considered, what is reasonable becomes irrational: intolerance, violent traffic, very high pollution, alienation, serious disorders of character, epidemic diseases, cancer, hypertension and nervous diseases, family dysfunction, criminality, impiety, loneliness among the masses, official injustice, lack of time for coexistence, crowds, femicides, abuses of authority, corrupt authorities and impunity circumvented by the crowds.

Capra (1992)takes a similarview:

> Our political leaders remain confined to the narrower thought structure of the old paradigm and think that the solution to particular cases adds up to an integrated whole and remain the fragmented approach that has become so characteristic of our political parties and government departments. But such an approach will never be able to solve any of the problems, but merely erratically shifts them, so that one year the number one problem is inflation; then, unemployment; next, drugs and crime; then some environmental problem and so on. But the real problem, deep down, is not faced; that is, the wrong perception of reality.

A couple of years ago, with the students of the master's degree in administration of the UAEMéx, based on the Systemic Approach (SE) and the Theory of Constraints (TOC), an exercise was carried out on the undesirable effects that they could mention as part of what they have perceived to be happening in their environment. As a result, a list of 100 undesirable effects was obtained, which was complemented by an improvised approach to the amounts of each effect. Of all of them, and as part of the exemplification of the consequences linked to the uncontrolled growth of the geographical area under study, some of them were chosen for brief commentary.

III. ECOLOGICAL IMPOVERISHMENT

A little more than half a century ago, in the basin of the Lerma River, the main aquifer of the region, there were areas and communities rich in plant and animal life on its banks and where people lived by taking advantage of the pastures and fertile lands on the humid banks and the multiple streams that beautified the region.

Suddenly, in a span of less than two decades, the Toluca-Lerma industrial zone developed at a dizzying pace, and the entire ecological system collapsed. The tributaries of the Lerma disappeared and the main river itself in part of its course became a dumping ground for industrial waste. In the government of Jiménez Cantú, a rescue plan was drawn up that was never carried out.

According to chronicles from previous centuries, the Toluca Valley and surrounding areas were rich in wildlife, typical of temperate regions. Deer, lynx, wolves, coyotes, foxes, gophers, badgers, owls, hawks, vultures, snakes, bobcats, carps, trout, and many other less remarkable species roamed the woods, hollows, lakes, rivers, and valleys. Nothing, absolutely none of the above exists today. Ecological awareness never manifested itself throughout the colonial era or in the beginnings of modern Mexico.

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Solid Waste Generation

Mapa 7.2 | *Generación de RSU por entidad federativa, 2012*
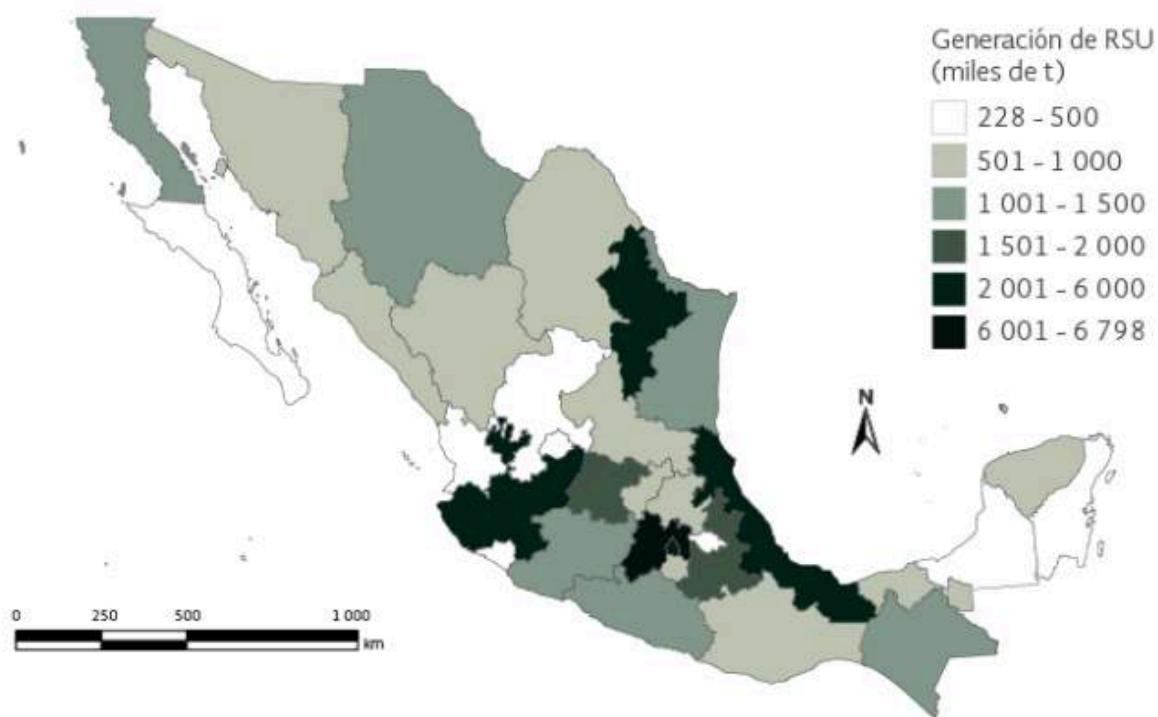
Fuente:
Dirección General de Equipamiento e Infraestructura en Zonas Urbano-Marginadas, Sedesol. México. 2013.

Source: Directorate-General for Equipment in Marginalized Urban Areas. Sedesol

Figure 3: Solid Waste Generation (MSW)

IV. URBAN FUEL THEFT (MSW) BY STATE

It is no coincidence that *sui generis* phenomena such as the theft of fuel in the pipelines of the PEMEX company have been carried out in hundreds of clandestine taps located mainly in Hidalgo, Puebla, Tlaxcala and Mexico, states that are part of the area with the highest population density.

This illegal activity has been popularly referred to as "Huachicoleo". Last year, the huachicoleros managed to extract gasoline for an annual amount close to 3 billion euros. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that many of the ringleaders who organized this crime were officials of the same official oil agency. They had hundreds of tankers, disguised fuel depots, and gas stations. It takes the "creative imagination" proposed by Vico for the people of civilized countries to believe in the existence of a system of corruption of such magnitude.[1]

V. COMMON LAW OFFENCES

In the middle of the last century, the civil life of the ordinary citizen went on without serious worries. He could have fun, go for walks, go to the countryside with his family, travel by bus, wander the streets, let his children go to school alone, do sports and athletic activities in parks and avenues. All this in this region of the country has almost entirely disappeared. Insecurity has settled in many cities and roads and people live in fear and many precautions. Almost no one dares to go out with their family after dusk and those who go to an amusement center at night know that the level

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[1]At the time of writing, there was still clandestine extraction at ten percent of what was normally stolen, yet fuel theft currentky excedes four thousand barrels per dey-

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of risk is high, and they must take extraordinary precautions. The new colonies are fenced and have guard booths that corroborate the identity of the neighbors.

There is no confidence in official figures related to crime. In a personal perception and without statistica foundations, we consider that in the region under study half a century ago there was one criminal for every thousand inhabitants. Now, instead of one criminal for every thousand inhabitants, there is one for every hundred. It is a minority that engages in crime if the total population is considered. Most of our fellow citizens earn an honest living. But if other indicators and empirical references are explored, the result can be frightening. That one percent

Common Order Crimes by State

means there are more than a million criminals on the streets. There is not an elderly person in the region that you talk to who does not express their experience of having been the object of a crime such as car theft, street robbery, burglary in the home or the kidnapping of a family member.

A separate case, due to the affliction and traumas it generates, is the crime of kidnapping. The state of Mexico has the highest figures in this area (with the exception of the state of Veracruz). The municipalities with the highest incidence of kidnappings in 2017 were the following: 32 in Ecatepec, 23 in Nezahualcóyotl, 22 in Toluca, 14 in Naucalpan de Juárez and 15 in Tecámac. (Rodríguez, 2017).

Table 5: Common law offences by State Fountain; INEGI 2022

Federal state	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022ᵖ
Aguascalientes	82	45	45	46	45	46	84	82	120	93	103	87
Baja California	809	581	767	717	854	1 152	2 169	2 912	2 823	2 967	3 248	2 681
Baja California Sur	42	37	47	92	180	238	751	200	104	78	77	89
Campeche	47	80	71	78	67	93	78	79	83	76	107	110
Coahuila de Zaragoza	730	1 160	800	469	313	257	275	244	306	242	171	169
Colima	163	265	225	140	227	613	867	747	830	694	607	867
Chiapas	186	390	492	460	539	552	591	662	619	536	568	499
Chihuahua	4 500	2 772	2 133	1 755	1 540	1 788	2 248	2 978	2 936	3 468	2 739	2 016
Ciudad de México	1 101	1 086	1 111	1 099	1 080	1 279	1 320	1 469	1 301	1 340	1 076	742
Durango	1 063	822	473	348	198	214	200	178	175	168	143	125
Guanajuato	615	684	702	800	970	1 232	2 285	3 517	4 019	5 370	4 333	4 256
Guerrero	2 416	2 646	2 283	1 729	2 424	2 594	2 637	2 367	1 937	1 507	1 468	1 378
Hidalgo	211	162	167	210	233	219	314	340	479	366	287	380
Jalisco	1 529	1 560	1 491	1 038	1 230	1 300	1 586	2 928	2 525	2 241	2 274	1 845
México	2 623	2 907	3 311	2 908	2 693	2 768	3 076	3 170	3 242	3 089	3 119	3 226
Michoacán de Ocampo	855	827	922	932	874	1 428	1 732	2 076	2 462	2 400	2 696	2 292
Morelos	456	671	629	438	469	659	654	823	1 059	988	1 199	1 149

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Nayarit	587	285	224	174	144	149	474	397	218	185	222	186
Nuevo León	2 174	1 832	926	574	473	627	664	850	987	919	1 070	1 391
Oaxaca	682	695	762	745	808	796	1 018	1 128	1 164	875	786	740
Puebla	437	465	557	568	632	735	1 083	1 249	1 274	1 031	847	1 061
Querétaro	109	112	119	106	140	137	218	229	224	227	231	187
Quintana Roo	163	154	164	125	145	193	455	841	750	628	677	635
San Luis Potosí	364	454	302	269	266	332	507	563	522	803	797	751
Sinaloa	1 990	1 395	1 220	1 156	1 098	1 303	1 640	1 214	1 133	866	635	558
Sonora	542	525	658	669	585	580	761	936	1 384	1 582	2 089	1 723
Tabasco	230	195	246	235	372	431	450	569	691	585	453	334
Tamaulipas	1 077	1 561	880	913	682	807	1 204	1 437	883	800	739	467
Tlaxcala	87	75	91	88	80	96	126	152	189	154	160	152
Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave	1 000	1 019	765	883	1 006	1 293	1 851	1 516	1 493	1 179	948	641
Yucatán	53	41	49	47	58	64	52	59	46	72	55	54
Zacatecas	290	464	431	199	337	584	709	773	683	1 244	1 776	1 432
Common Order Crimes by State	**27 213**	**25 967**	**23 063**	**20 010**	**20 762**	**24 559**	**32 079**	**36 685**	**36 661**	**36 773**	**35 700**	**32 223**

VI. VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

The vehicle fleet of the Mexico City Metropolitan Area (ZMCM) more than doubled in a decade: it grew 159% and added more than 9.5 million motorized units in circulation in 2015 (the latest data updated by official sources), from the 3.7 million registered in 2005. This has aggravated the crisis of road traffic and polluting emissions in the megalopolis.

The dizzying growth is equivalent to more than three times the increase observed in the previous ten years (1995-2005), which was 45%, and meant that 587,000 vehicles were added to the circulation of the streets and avenues of Mexico City and the 18 conurbated municipalities of the State of Mexico that make up the megalopolis each year or 1,596 units per day or 57 per hour, depending on the unit of time taken as a reference.

Vehicular expansion has also been faster than that of the country as a whole, which was 81.6% in the period from 2005 to 2015, which caused a significant increase in the density of cars in the area, which went from concentrating 16% of the national car fleet in 2005, to 23.6% in 2015. according to figures from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

Beyond the official statistics, the experience is exhausting and the mood becomes traumatic for those who need to travel in this area. Personally, the signatories of this document have recorded lines of more than five kilometers on the Mexico-Toluca highway and if it is rainy season there are frequent traffic jams in the low-lying areas where torrents accumulate. There are companies and institutions that have had to make working hours more flexible as the density of vehicles prevents the punctual arrival of personnel.

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Light Vehicle Sales in 2023

Source: INEGI RAIAVL, January 2024. It includes the sale to the public of vehicles manufactured in Mexico plus those imported

Figure 4: Total retail sale of light vehicles (number of vehicles)

At the beginning of the work and as an epigraph a verse by Paul Geraldy was noted: "Habit becomes necessity". With it, we imply that people get used to everyday difficulties and may even miss them: crowds; the anonymity that crowds provide; driving in congested traffic; the "pride" of living in one of the most densely populated areas on the planet, as if it were a feat to which they have collaborated; the high probability of going unnoticed when you throw a "love slip" ("little song in the air"), etc. But if the quality of life is related to freedom, health, equality and coexistence with justice, a population density of such magnitude cannot be justified. A phenomenon that deserves specialized research is the conformity of many people who adapt to crowds. (Manzano, 2006).

But the most important thing is the long-term projection and the negative consequences that are already being experienced. Kidnappings, assaults, accidents, illnesses and mental disorders are everyday occurrences. It won't be long before this is not the most serious thing, but circumstances that affect the population globally, such as water

scarcity, air pollution that produces mass deaths, as happened in London in 1952 (Bates, 2002), the degradation of public education and other services such as garbage collection, adulterated, contaminated and scarce food, etc.

According to Meawdows (2004), countries such as Mexico must examine the five basic factors that ultimately determine their role in the alarming exploitation of this planet: *population, agricultural production, the depletion of non-renewable resources, industrial production, and the generation of pollution.*

VII. PROPOSAL

The day when it is possible to build on love has not yet come.
This sentence sounds cheesy, excessively romantic,
as a dream against violence, consumption, and economic push...
but it is the only way to justice, freedom and coexistence among all.

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Although the two paradigms mentioned above have been very useful for the approach of the study, they are also appropriate tools for the elaboration of proposed solutions.

The Systemic Approach is a theoretical framework that underpins the interrelation of the objects that make up a project, whether they are people, programs, resources, policies or environmental conditions. The systemic approach must not only take a holistic view in order to preserve what exists but, as far as possible, to recover what no longer has its rightful place. Ecological preservation and rescue are obligatory references in any human activity. This requires a complete change in the way we live, work and make the most of resources. Something that seems like a utopia in this region, more unachievable than overcoming ethnic discrimination.

On the other hand, the Theory of Constraints (TOC) serves to create reality trees with which a complete vision of all the undesirable effects that an organization, project, community or plan could face (Goldratt, 2012). The reality tree is a schema with undesirable effects linked in cause-and-effect relationships that can be reciprocal, i.e., a cause produces an effect which in turn feeds back into the cause. Causes and effects can be multifaceted, that is, they can be linked to several causes and several effects, forming a kind of network. Once the schematization is completed, the undesirable effect to which most of the other effects point is the one that must be considered as a priority in terms of the efforts and resources to attack it and achieve its disappearance or at least its considerable reduction. When this is done successfully, it often happens that other undesirable effects disappear as a result of the actions taken against the priority effect. The schema is then reconstructed with the remaining undesirable effects and the process is repeated in a similar manner. This way of working really endorses continuous improvement, as it prioritizes the importance of restrictions and allows for an efficient strategy of planning, organization, execution, and control of operations.

In the present case, we would first have to draw up a list of undesirable effects or causes that have led to the unprecedented growth of the region. Among them we can mention the following:

- Influence peddling to approve new subdivision projects
- Lack of urban development plans and programmes
- Ecological ignorance
- Obsolete or inoperative legislation.
- Sponsorship between builders and government officials
- Corruption of the authorities
- Social pressure for job creation in the construction industry
- Speculation with the purchase and sale of land
- Construction companies owned by the same officials
- Lack of a long-term vision
- Population pressure
- And so on, and so on.

If we were to link all the effects together, we would find that most of them point to the corruption of the authorities. So, this would be the restriction whose nullification or significant reduction would allow real progress in halting the region's growth.

VIII. HOW CAN CHANGE BE BROUGHT ABOUT?

When corruption has become ingrained in the culture of many people, it is very difficult to achieve change without leaders changing. Fortunately, and at the time of writing, the authorities have been reiterating that the country's number one need is the eradication of corruption. We believe that his perception is correct. Nothing can be achieved with long-term benefits if corruption is mixed with economic projects and advances and other fundamental areas of national life such as health and education if they are not based on the honorability and honesty of those who make decisions.

If this premise is met, a programme of work based on priorities endorsed by the systems approach

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and the theory of constraints or other paradigms that provide epistemic, political, cultural and practical foundations for the path to be followed is immediately necessary. Conviction of the need for change is essential to achieve it.

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A Study Cashless Transaction of Small Retailing Sector: A Case Study on Haridwar District

Akash Keshri

ABSTRACT

In the era of innovation and technology, while the world moved to cashless payments nearly a decade ago, India was lagging in cashless payments due to a lack of knowledge in electronic transactions and the usage of smartphones. It was Mukesh Ambani who launched Jio 4G and 5G services at an affordable price which brought a revolution in internet facilities the Demonetization policy of the Modi government has changed the outlook of the Indian Cashless scenario with the passage of time and discoveries in the services like online shopping, card swiping machine, credit card, debit card has helped the people in caring less cash with them.

Keywords: cashless transaction, e-transaction, cashless economy, online transaction.

Classification: JEL Code: E42, G21, O33

Language: English

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ABSTRACT

In the era of innovation and technology, while the world moved to cashless payments nearly a decade ago, India was lagging in cashless payments due to a lack of knowledge in electronic transactions and the usage of smartphones. It was Mukesh Ambani who launched Jio 4G and 5G services at an affordable price which brought a revolution in internet facilities the Demonetization policy of the Modi government has changed the outlook of the Indian Cashless scenario with the passage of time and discoveries in the services like online shopping, card swiping machine, credit card, debit card has helped the people in caring less cash with them.

I. INTRODUCTION

On 8th November 2016 the Modi government awoke the entire nation from the dream of black money by demonetization, or banned of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 which were the two highest demonetization notes from circulation in the economy(Mohan & Ray, 2019). The main motive behind such a step was to exploit corruption and black money in the monetary system of our country. The RBI and the Government of India are attempting various efforts to minimize the use of physical cash in the economy by promoting digital payment devices or modes including prepaid instruments and cards(Chakraborty & Prashad, 2020; Mohan & Ray, 2019). The main motive of the RBI behind the implementation of such an effort is to achieve the objective of a 'less cash' society. Both the terms 'cashless' and 'less cash' indicate the same thing of minimizing cash transactions and settlements rather than doing transactions digitally(Garg & Panchal, 2017a).

A cashless transaction economy does not mean a shortage or scarcity of cash rather it indicates a culture of people settling transactions digitally. In a modern economy, money moves electronically and hence the spread of digital payment systems along with the expansion of infrastructure facilities is needed to achieve the goal. A cashless transaction is one in which goods and services are exchanged without the use of currency either through electronic transfer or through the use of a check(Anand & Thillairajan, 2017) Looking back in time, the impact of cashless payment on an individual may be seen. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory can be used to examine the economy (DOI). The idea was originally presented in 1962 when he discussed how invention spreads over time to members of a social system (Rogers, 1995). The DOI (Digital Object Identifier) Interaction between individuals causes the adoption of a new idea or invention using interpersonal networks. The spread of cashless transactions is referred to as diffusion in this context. Where consumers are looking for payment and cheque. Security checks, security difficulties, non-IT knowledgeable users, and phishing emails are just a few of the drawbacks of adopting cashless payment. Payments are made without using currency. Money is lost, and personal information is compromised. Consumers' trust in making electronic payments is eroding. There isn't

any convincing proof of how the use of cashless payment may affect an organization's economics Payments made without cash may have a positive impact on economic activity(Kumar, 2020).

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A preliminary survey has been carried out on several issues associated with the topic of research. As the work is based on cashless transactions and the small retailing sector, a brief survey has been undertaken in this regard and the books consulted for this purpose are as follows-

Borhan Omar Ahmad Al-Dalaien in the research paper entitled "Cashless Economy in India: Challenges" published in the Asian Journal of Applied Science and Technology (AJAST), 2017 examined that a cashless economy is an economic system in which there is little or very low cash flow in society and goods and services are bought and paid through electronic media. There are many benefits of the cashless economy like faster transactions, increased sales, prompt settlement of transactions, convenience and lower risk, transparency and accountability, and reduced maintenance costs. Despite many benefits, there are several challenges before the cashless policy in India such as an inadequate number of ATMs, digital illiteracy, lack of internet facilities, few banks in villages, costly swipe machines, etc. The findings revealed that there are no significant benefits of a cashless economy to the general public.

(Garg & Panchal, 2017) the research paper entitled "Study on Introduction of Cashless Economy in India 2016: Benefits and Challenges" published in the IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM), 2017 examined that many people had positive opinions about cashless transactions and the usefulness of cashless economy as it helps to fight against terrorism, corruption, money laundering but one major problem in the working of cashless economy in India is cybercrimes and illegal access to primary data. Therefore, it's important to strengthen Internet Security to protect against online fraud. A huge number of the population in India is still below the literacy rate living in rural areas. For smooth implementation of the cashless system in India, the following measures are recommended Government has to bring transparency and efficiency to the e-payment system, strategies used by the government and Reserve Bank of India to motivate cashless transactions by licensing payment banks, promoting mobile wallets and withdrawing service charge on cards and digital payments. A financial literacy campaign should be conducted by the government continuously to make the population aware of the advantages of electronic payments.

(Singhraul & Garwal, 2018) in the research paper entitled "Cashless Economy- Challenges and Opportunities in India" published in the Pacific Business Review International, 2018 examined that the major findings of the study show that India in terms of using digital payment methods is still very poor in comparison to other developed countries in the world. As many countries are already turned up with their electronic payment system, India is in its beginning stage and most of all population is mainly dependent on paper-based transactions because of the unavailability of proper internet connectivity, lack of awareness and knowledge of financial transactions, charges on card payments and un operational bank accounts.

(Hasan et al., 2020)researched India's Retailing Challenges. He did it for the study's sake. He has conducted a survey of 1,948 retail outlets in 41 major Indian cities. The sample is made from Consumer durable stores (26%) and conventional or food shops (64%) made up the majority of the sample %), as well as modern-format retailers (10 percent). He has utilized 20 key roadblocks that he has encountered by Indian retailers. Electricity issues, access to financing, corruption, land issues, tax issues, informality, crime and disorder, acquiring permits, tax administration, pricing controls, transportation, court functioning, skill shortages, policy uncertainty, store hour limitations, Customs, Telecom, Labor laws, Macro instability, and FDI limitations were among them. Inadequate power

supply, access to finance, corruption, tax rates, and land-related issues were found to be the most significant barriers to future expansion in the retail business.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is as follows-
1. To study the scope and extent of using e- e-payment mechanism.
2. To study the benefits derived by the Small Retail Sector out of the e-payment system.
3. To analyze the problems faced by the Small Retailers while using cashless transactions.

III.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and consists of both primary and secondary data to find the objectives. The study area was Haridwar which is also known as "The Gateway to the Gods" is a beautiful city in the heart of Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is famous for its stunning natural beauty and divine Hindu tourism. Due to the increased number of tourists in Haridwar, the significance of digital payment also increases. The present study focuses on the cashless transactions of the small retail sector of Haridwar, Hari ki Pauri, Bhagwanpur, and Roorkee areas. The study has a limited due to limited time constraints and funding. A 100 number of people were surveyed using a questionnaire to collect the necessary primary data for the study. The study used mixed questionaries consisting of dichotomous and close-ended structure questionnaires, data was collected from respondents using a non-probability sampling technique. The measurement of the items was done with the help of a four-scale Likert scale.

IV.   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Descriptive Study: The first part of the questionnaire consists of various descriptive questions like gender, Marital status, age, etc. The interpretation is as follows-

Q1: Gender-Wise Classification of the Retailers.

Table 1:

SL NO	Respondent	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	Male	35	77.8	77.8
2	Female	10	22.2	100
3	Others	0	0	0
Total		100		

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: The above table no 1 illustrates that there are a total of 45 respondents of which 35 are male and 10 are female. It also shows the percentage of males as 77.8% and females as 22.2%.

Q2: Status of the Retailer's Marital Status

Table 2:

SL NO	Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	Married	40	88.8	88.8
2	Unmarried	5	11.2	100
Total		45		100

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

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Interpretation: Table No. 2 illustrates that there are 45 respondents of which 40 are married and 5 are unmarried. It also shows that 88.8% are married and 11.2% are unmarried.

Q3: Educational Qualification

Table 3:

SL NO	Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	10th Pass	10	22.2	22.2
2	12th Pass	20	44.4	66.6
3	Graduation and above	15	33.4	100
	TOTAL	45	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table No. 3 depicts that there are 45 respondents in which respondents are divided into three categories 10th Pass, 12th Pass, and Graduation Pass and above. It also shows the percentage of the 10th Pass as 22.2%, the 12th Pass as 44.4%, and the Graduation Pass and above as 33.4%.

Q4: Usage of Cashless Transaction.

Table 4:

SL NO	Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	Yes	30	66.7	66.7
2	No	15	33.3	100
	TOTAL	45	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table No. 4 depicts the number of respondents using e-payment transactions in their retail stores. It is seen that the respondents using e-payment transactions are more in number i.e. 66.7% compared to the respondents who are 33.3% who don't use e-payment while transacting. The policy of cashless transactions of the government is not completely successful, hence more awareness and advertisement are required.

Q5: Reasons for non-acceptance of cashless payments.

Table 5:

SL NO.	Respondents Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	Lack of knowledge	3	20	20
2	Lack of smartphones	5	33.3	53.3
3	Lack of trust	4	26.7	80
4	Others	3	20	100
	TOTAL	15		100

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table No. 5 depicts that While a majority of retailers have welcomed cashless payments, there are still some issues in going towards 100% adoption. There were 15 respondents who were yet not offering cashless payment options to their customers. The major reasons for non-acceptance of cashless transactions are observed to be the lack of smartphones, lack of trust, lack

of knowledge, and other specified reasons which are not disclosed at the time of questioning. The pie-chart clearly depicts that of lack of smartphones is the main reason with a majority of 33.3%, while there is a trust issue with 26.7% and lack of adequate knowledge about the use of cashless also bears another reason for not using this facility which holds 20 % of the above diagram. Again another 20% of those who do not prefer cashless transactions refer to other reasons for not using this facility.

Q6: How often do they use the e-payment method?

Table 6:

SL NO.	Respondent Opinion	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1.	Credit Card	3				10	10
2.	Debit Card	3				10	20
3.	Mobile Payment	24				80	100
4.	E-wallet						
5.	E-Cheque						
	TOTAL	30				100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table No. 6 depicts the Small Retail Sector using E-payment daily in their own transactions. E-payment has become a basic need of their daily activities. 10% of the respondents use credit cards daily while the other 10% of respondents use a debit card and the remaining 80% use mobile payment.

Q7: Likings of the E-payment among the five modes of e-payment system.

Table 7:

SL NO.	Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	Credit Card	7	23.3	23.3
2	Debit Card	3	10	33.3
3	Mobile Payment	20	66.7	100
4	E-wallet	0		
5	E- cheque	0		
	TOTAL	30	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table No. 7 depicts the number of respondents who like the different modes of E-payment. The Small retail sector likes mobile payments more because the customers are more convenient to carry their mobile rather than cash and smart cards because of losing them in the markets. The diagram clearly shows the number of retailers like mobile payment is 66.7%, while credit card stands at second place with 22.2% and debit card at 11.1%. The charts also depict that the retailers are not more comfortable with the E- cheques and E- wallets in the Haridwar District.

Q8: Reasons for choosing E- payment.

Table 8:

SL NO.	Respondent Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1	Convenient	6	20	20
2	Safe and Secure	12	40	60
3	Low Service Tax	7	23.3	83.3
4	Easy to maintain banking transactions	5	16.7	100
	TOTAL	30	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: The above Table No 8 above illustrates the number of Small retail sectors that choose cashless transactions instead of paper transactions because of the following reasons convenience, safety and security, low service tax, and ease of maintaining the banking transactions. The cashless transaction also helps retailers from the fear of theft and robbery because now all the hard-earned profits are directly transferred to the bank rather than the traditional cash box. The charts depict retailers choose cashless transactions because it is safe and secure with a respondent of 40% while some feel it is helpful in low service tax with a respondent of 23.3% while others feel it is convenient with a respondent of 20% and other feel it helps in maintaining banking transactions with a respondent of 16.7%

Q9: The satisfaction of the e-payment.

Table 9:

SL NO.	Respondent Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1.	Strongly Agree	25	83.3	83.3
2.	Agree	5	16.7	100
3.	Disagree			
4.	Strongly Agree			
	TOTAL	30	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table 9 illustrates the number of Small Retailing Sectors that are satisfied with the e-payment transaction. The table depicts the numbers of respondents who are satisfied with the e-payment transactions with 83.3% and strongly satisfied with 16.7%.

Q10: Benefits derived by the respondents after using e-payment.

Table 9:

SL NO.	Respondents Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1.	Saves time	4	13.3	13.3
2.	Generate more profit	3	10	23.3
3.	Safe and secure	3	10	33.3
4.	Fraud	20	66.7	100
	TOTAL	30	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table 10 illustrates the benefits derived by the Small Retailers Store through cashless payments. When compared to traditional payment methods such as cash or cheque, e-payment is extremely convenient. Customers don't have to wait in line for their turn to transact since they may pay for goods or services online at any time of day or night, from anywhere in the globe. They also don't have to wait for a cheque to clear the bank before getting the money they need to purchase. E-payment also removes the security issues associated with dealing with cash. The pie- chart depicts cashless economy helps access fewer fraud cases with 66.7% while it saves the time of the retailers by 13.3% and generates more profit for 10% while the other 10% feel it is safe and secure.

Q 11: The increase of sales after e-payment.

Table 11:

SL NO.	Respondent's Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
1.	Strongly Agree	17	56.7	56.7
2.	Agree	13	43.3	100
3.	Disagree			
4.	Strongly Agree			
	TOTAL	30	100	

Source: Primary data (N= 100)

Interpretation: Table 11 illustrates that e-payment has boosted the sales of Small Retailers. The number of individuals making cash payments is dropping as internet banking and shopping grow more popular. According to Bankrate report more than two-thirds of customers carry less than $50 in cash daily, indicating that electronic payments are becoming the preferred method of payment. As a result, e-payment allows firms to sell to clients who choose to pay online, giving them a competitive edge over companies that solely accept traditional payment methods. The pie- diagram shows that respondents strongly agree with 56.7% and 43.3% of respondents agree with the increase in the profitability of the business.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Electronic payment is a subset of an e-commerce transaction that includes electronic payment for the purchase and sale of products and services via the internet. Although most people associate electronic payments with online purchases, there are many other types of electronic payments. As technology advances, the number of devices and mechanisms for transacting electronically expands, while the ratio of cash and check transactions decreases. In other words, an electronic payment system is required to compensate for information on goods and services provided over the Internet, such as access to copyrighted materials, database searches, or system resource consumption, as well as to provide a convenient method of payment for external goods and services, such as merchandise and services provided outside the internet. It aids in the automation of sales operations, increases the number of possible customers, and may minimize the quantity of paperwork. Based on the survey findings we can conclude that the Small Retail Sectors are the basic ingredients of the Cashless Economy cuisines. They are the basic root from where every day we get our daily needs from bread-butter to desserts for dinner. So, it will be a good step if we start cashless transactions from our neighboring grocery stores which have been serving us for many years. It is seen that network issues were the main hurdles for e-payment services so there is a recommendation to the telecom industries that they need to improve their services to smooth the flow of e-payment transactions. One more piece of advice is more campaign and advertisements is required to aware our local small retail stores and as a responsible customer we should demand e-payment transactions.

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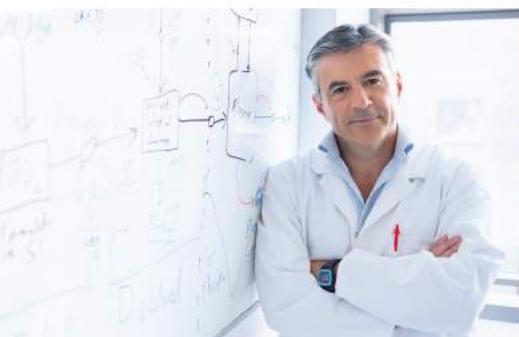
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