

Exploring the Professional Identity and Workplace Challenges of Migrant Filipino Teachers in Thailand: Basis for a Proposed Support Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the professional identity and workplace challenges of migrant Filipino teachers in the Central Region of Thailand to inform the development of a responsive support program. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 155 migrant Filipino teachers employed in public, private, bilingual, and international schools in Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, and Samut Prakan via a researcher-developed survey questionnaire. Professional identity was assessed across five dimensions: self-categorization as educators, perceived pedagogical competence, professional agency, cultural integration/adaptability, and professional commitment. Workplace challenges were evaluated in terms of linguistic and communication barriers, socio-cultural adjustments, compensation and benefit disparities, instructional resource limitations, and perceived professional discrimination. Data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage distribution, weighted mean, standard deviation, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation, Point-Biserial Correlation, and Kendall's Tau-b. Findings revealed that migrant Filipino teachers demonstrated a high level of professional identity ($M = 4.24$), while workplace challenges were perceived as moderately serious ($M = 3.39$). Compensation and benefit disparities and perceived professional discrimination emerged as the most prominent concerns. A significant negative relationship was found between professional identity and workplace challenges ($r_s = -0.432$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that teachers with stronger professional identity experienced fewer workplace difficulties. The study was limited to migrant Filipino teachers in the Central Region, and findings may not generalize to other contexts. The study concluded that strong professional identity contributes to better workplace adjustment and resilience. Project KABALIKAT, a support program focusing on professional development, cultural adaptation, workplace inclusion, emotional well-being, and institutional support, was proposed to enhance the professional growth and workplace experiences of migrant Filipino teachers in Thailand.

Keywords: Professional identity, workplace challenges, migrant Filipino teachers, workplace discrimination, teacher resilience

INTRODUCTION

The increasing globalization and internationalization of education have significantly expanded teacher mobility across national borders. As educational systems become more interconnected, countries continue to recruit foreign educators to address teacher shortages,

improve instructional quality, and support growing demand for globally competitive learners. UNESCO (2023) reported that teacher shortages remain a critical global concern, prompting educational institutions to seek qualified teachers beyond national boundaries. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) emphasized that the internationalization of education has intensified teacher mobility across countries, particularly in regions where qualified educators are in short supply.

The expansion of English-medium instruction, bilingual education programs, and internationalized curricula has further increased the demand for teachers with strong pedagogical competence, intercultural awareness, and the ability to function effectively in multicultural educational environments. Consequently, teacher migration has become an important feature of contemporary educational systems, providing opportunities for professional growth while simultaneously exposing educators to diverse cultural, organizational, and workplace contexts (Macapagong et al., 2023).

Within this global context, the Philippines continues to be a major source of migrant professionals, including teachers employed across different countries. Filipino educators are widely recognized for their English proficiency, pedagogical competence, adaptability, and commitment to teaching. Many pursue overseas employment to achieve professional advancement, economic stability, and improved career opportunities. Uytico and Abadiano (2020) noted that Filipino educators working abroad frequently demonstrate resilience and adaptability as they navigate foreign educational systems.

Among Southeast Asian countries, Thailand has emerged as a leading destination for Filipino teachers. The country's educational reforms, expansion of English language programs, and increasing emphasis on English proficiency have created sustained demand for qualified foreign educators. The Office of the Education Council of Thailand (2022) reported that the continuous implementation of English-language initiatives has increased the recruitment of foreign teachers in both public and private educational institutions.

Despite available opportunities, migrant Filipino teachers continue to encounter various workplace challenges that may influence their professional experiences and well-being. Recent studies have identified language barriers, cultural adaptation difficulties, communication challenges, workplace expectations, and institutional adjustment as common concerns among foreign educators in Thailand (Perales et al., 2025; Cea, 2026; Grafil, 2026). Communication and cultural adaptation remain particularly important concerns, as effective communication extends beyond language proficiency to include understanding workplace expectations, social norms, and cultural values within educational institutions (Suwanaroa & Polerk, 2024).

These workplace experiences are closely associated with professional identity, which refers to how teachers perceive themselves as professionals based on their beliefs, values, competencies, experiences, and workplace interactions. Contemporary literature emphasizes that professional identity is a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by personal experiences, professional practice, workplace relationships, and sociocultural contexts. Quines and Saycon (2023) explained that professional identity is an important resource that influences teachers' commitment, resilience, and engagement. Nigar and Kostogriz (2025) highlighted that professional identity among migrant educators is continuously negotiated as they adapt to new educational systems and cultural expectations.

While professional identity and workplace challenges have been widely examined as separate constructs, understanding how they interact is particularly important among migrant educators. Professional identity may serve as a protective professional resource enabling teachers to cope with workplace difficulties, adapt to unfamiliar environments, and maintain commitment despite challenges. Understanding the relationship between professional identity and workplace challenges is therefore essential in developing effective support mechanisms for migrant educators.

Although previous studies have examined teacher migration, workplace adjustment, cultural adaptation, and professional identity, limited research has specifically investigated the relationship between professional identity and workplace challenges among migrant Filipino teachers in Thailand. No known quantitative descriptive-correlational study has comprehensively examined relationships among demographic profile variables, professional identity, and workplace challenges among migrant Filipino teachers in the Central Region of Thailand. Addressing this gap is important because understanding this relationship may provide valuable insights for developing institutional support mechanisms that promote teacher well-being, workplace adjustment, professional effectiveness, and long-term career sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the level of professional identity and the seriousness of workplace challenges encountered by migrant Filipino teachers in the Central Region of Thailand.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of migrant Filipino teachers in Thailand in terms of age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, area of specialization, length of service, relevant seminars/trainings attended, and average monthly income?
2. What is the level of professional identity of migrant Filipino teachers in terms of self-categorization as an educator, perceived pedagogical competence, professional agency, cultural integration/adaptability, and professional commitment?
3. What is the seriousness of workplace challenges encountered in terms of linguistic and communication barriers, socio-cultural adjustments, compensation and benefit disparities, instructional resource limitations, and perceived professional discrimination?
4. Is there a significant relationship between professional identity and workplace challenges?
5. Is there a significant relationship between professional identity and demographic profile variables?
6. Is there a significant relationship between workplace challenges and demographic profile variables?
7. Based on the findings, what support program may be proposed?

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on migrant Filipino teachers working in the Central Region of Thailand, particularly Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, and Samut Prakan. Respondents consisted of Filipino teachers employed in public, private, bilingual, and international schools with at least one year of teaching experience in Thailand. The study examined professional

identity across five dimensions and workplace challenges across five domains. Other factors such as mental health conditions, family-related concerns, personality traits, teaching performance evaluations, and immigration policies were beyond the scope of the study. Findings are limited to respondent responses during the research conducted and may not be generalized to all migrant teachers in Thailand or other countries.

Review of Related Literature

Professional Identity as a Professional Resource

Professional identity is widely recognized as fundamental to teachers' professional lives, shaping how educators perceive themselves, perform responsibilities, and interact within educational environments. Contemporary literature describes professional identity as dynamic and evolving, developing through continuous interaction among personal experiences, professional practice, workplace environments, and social relationships (Nigar & Kostogriz, 2025).

Beyond its professional function, professional identity serves as an important psychological resource supporting teachers' well-being and effectiveness. Research indicates that teachers with stronger professional identities exhibit greater resilience, confidence, workplace engagement, and commitment when facing professional demands (Quines & Saycon, 2023). The significance of professional identity is particularly evident among teachers working in international and multicultural contexts, where migrant teachers frequently encounter language differences, cultural adjustments, and institutional transitions that require continuous adaptation (Ennerberg & Economou, 2021).

Workplace Challenges and Organizational Support

Workplace challenges are professional, organizational, and environmental difficulties that employees encounter. For migrant professionals, these challenges often include language barriers, cultural differences, unfamiliar organizational systems, and limited workplace resources (Muldong & Roque, 2026; Galvez & Episcopo, 2025). Organizational support plays a critical role in helping employees navigate challenges and maintain professional effectiveness. Studies consistently demonstrate that supportive organizational environments contribute positively to employee engagement, resilience, commitment, and workplace satisfaction (Yu et al., 2025).

Compensation, Benefits, and Professional Equity

Compensation, benefits, and employment conditions are important determinants of employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention. UNESCO (2023) highlighted that inadequate compensation and unfavorable employment conditions contribute to teacher dissatisfaction and workforce instability. Professional equity—fairness in compensation, workload distribution, opportunities, and workplace treatment—significantly influences employees' workplace experiences and organizational commitment (Muldong & Roque, 2026).

Professional Discrimination and Workplace Inclusion

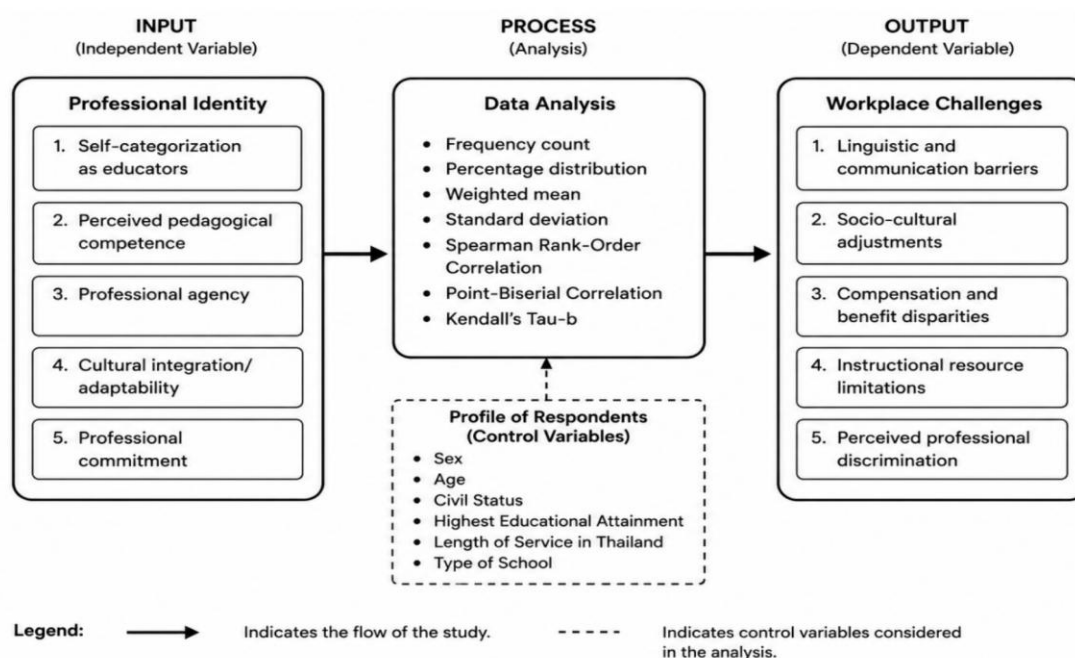
Professional discrimination refers to unequal treatment experienced by employees because of nationality, ethnicity, language background, or migrant status. Workplace experiences among migrant professionals are often shaped by social perceptions, cultural

stereotypes, and institutional practices. Studies have shown that foreign-born professionals may encounter challenges in the recognition of their qualifications and professional expertise (Timoteo & Lincod, 2026; González-Doğan et al., 2024). In contrast, workplace inclusion promotes fairness, respect, participation, and equal access to professional opportunities, contributing positively to engagement, confidence, and organizational commitment (Ba Akhlagh et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored in Professional Identity Theory (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), which explains how teachers construct and understand themselves as professionals through beliefs, experiences, values, and interactions within educational environments. Supporting theories included Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which explains how group membership influences individuals' sense of belonging and professional identity; Resilience Theory (Masten, 2018), which explains how individuals positively adapt despite adversity; Cultural Adaptation Theory (Kim, 2017), which explains how individuals adjust psychologically and socially to unfamiliar cultural environments; and Work Adjustment Theory (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), which explains that workplace satisfaction and effectiveness are achieved when there is correspondence between employees' abilities and organizational conditions.

Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component determined the level of professional identity and seriousness of workplace challenges, while the correlational component examined relationships among demographic profile variables, professional identity, and workplace challenges. This design was appropriate because the study sought to describe existing conditions and determine significant relationships without manipulating the research environment (Fraenkel et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Setting

The study was conducted in the Central Region of Thailand, particularly Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, and Samut Prakan. These provinces were purposively selected because they are major centers for education and international employment where substantial numbers of migrant Filipino teachers are employed in public, private, bilingual, and international schools (Office of the Education Council Thailand, 2022).

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents comprised 155 migrant Filipino teachers currently employed in educational institutions in the selected areas. Inclusion criteria were: (1) Filipino citizenship; (2) at least one year of teaching experience in Thailand; (3) current employment in public, private, bilingual, or international schools within the selected areas; and (4) voluntary agreement to participate. The study employed purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Purposive sampling ensured that only respondents with relevant experience were included, while convenience sampling was used based on the accessibility and availability of qualified respondents.

Data Gathering Instrument

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was utilized consisting of three parts: (1) demographic profile including age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, area of specialization, length of service, seminars/trainings attended, and average monthly income; (2) Professional Identity Scale measuring self-categorization as an educator, perceived pedagogical competence, professional agency, cultural integration/adaptability, and professional commitment using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree); and (3) Workplace Challenges Scale measuring linguistic and communication barriers, socio-cultural adjustments, compensation and benefit disparities, instructional resource limitations, and perceived professional discrimination using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Not Serious at All to 5 = Extremely Serious).

Validation and Reliability

The questionnaire underwent content validation by a panel of five experts specializing in Educational Management, Research Methodology, and English Language Education. Validators evaluated the instrument for relevance, clarity, organization, and suitability. Based on

recommendations, items were revised, refined, and modified to ensure effective measurement of the study variables.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data gathering, necessary permissions were secured from school administrators. Potential respondents were identified through professional networks, Filipino teacher associations, and referrals. Informed consent was obtained before questionnaire administration. The questionnaire was distributed through printed copies or Google Forms, depending on the respondent's accessibility and preference. Responses were checked, organized, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics included frequency counts, percentage distributions, weighted means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics included Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between professional identity and workplace challenges, Point-Biserial Correlation Coefficient for dichotomous profile variables (sex, marital status, area of specialization), and Kendall's Tau-b for ordinal profile variables (age, educational attainment, length of service, seminars attended, income). All tests were applied at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with no respondent forced or pressured to participate. The purpose, procedures, and significance of the study were clearly explained. Informed consent was secured before administration. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained using codes instead of names. All information was treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 155 migrant Filipino teachers. The majority belonged to the 31–40-year-old age group (43.9%), were female (71.0%), single (51.0%), and held Bachelor's degrees (38.1%). Most specialized in secondary education (BSED) (76.8%), had five years or less of teaching experience in Thailand (44.5%), attended zero to two relevant seminars/trainings (36.1%), and reported an average monthly income of 25,001–35,000 Baht (51.0%).

These findings suggest that respondents were predominantly young-to-middle-aged professionals actively engaged in teaching careers within the Thai education system. The predominance of female respondents reflects greater female participation in teaching. The educational qualifications and professional experience indicate that respondents possessed competencies necessary to perform effectively in foreign educational environments. This finding aligns with Herrera-Espinoza et al. (2024), who emphasized that demographic and professional characteristics influence teachers' workplace experiences and professional development.

Level of Professional Identity

Table 2 presents the summary of professional identity levels across five dimensions. The overall mean was 4.24, interpreted as High Identification. Self-Categorization as an Educator obtained the highest mean (4.26), while Professional Commitment obtained the lowest (4.21). All dimensions were interpreted as High Identification.

These findings indicate that migrant Filipino teachers possessed strong professional identity across all dimensions. Respondents viewed themselves as legitimate members of the teaching profession, demonstrated confidence in pedagogical abilities, exercised professional agency, adapted effectively to the cultural environment, and remained committed to professional responsibilities despite challenges. This finding aligns with Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), who described professional identity as multidimensional and continuously developed through workplace experiences and professional relationships.

Table 2

Summary of Professional Identity Level

Domain	Mean	Description
Self-Categorization as an Educator	4.26	High Identification
Perceived Pedagogical Competence	4.23	High Identification
Professional Agency	4.24	High Identification
Cultural Integration/Adaptability	4.23	High Identification
Professional Commitment	4.21	High Identification
Overall Mean	4.24	High Identification

Seriousness of Workplace Challenges

Table 3 presents the summary of workplace challenges across five dimensions. The overall mean was 3.39, interpreted as Moderate Seriousness. Compensation and Benefit Disparities obtained the highest mean (3.92), followed by Perceived Professional Discrimination (3.80), both interpreted as High Seriousness. Instructional Resource Limitations obtained the lowest mean (2.97), interpreted as Moderate Seriousness.

These findings indicate that workplace challenges moderately affect the professional experiences of migrant Filipino teachers. Compensation and benefit concerns emerged as the most serious challenges, followed by perceived professional discrimination. The high rating for perceived discrimination indicates that professional recognition, participation, and equitable treatment remain significant concerns. This finding aligns with Mussa and Boniface (2024), who emphasized that compensation significantly influences employee motivation and satisfaction, and Ma and Lei (2024), who noted that perceived discrimination negatively affects professional well-being and organizational commitment.

Table 3

Summary of Workplace Challenges Seriousness

Domain	Mean	Description
Linguistic and Communication Barriers	3.19	Moderate Seriousness
Socio-Cultural Adjustments	3.09	Moderate Seriousness
Compensation and Benefit Disparities	3.92	High Seriousness

Instructional Resource Limitations	2.97	Moderate Seriousness
Perceived Professional Discrimination	3.80	High Seriousness
Overall Mean	3.39	Moderate Seriousness

Relationship Between Professional Identity and Workplace Challenges

Table 4 presents the relationship between professional identity and workplace challenges. A significant negative relationship was found between overall professional identity and overall workplace challenges ($r_s = -0.432$, $p = 0.000$). The strongest negative relationship was observed between overall professional identity and socio-cultural adjustments ($r_s = -0.396$, $p = 0.000$). No significant relationship was found between overall professional identity and compensation and benefit disparities ($r_s = -0.124$, $p = 0.125$).

These findings indicate that respondents with higher levels of professional identity tended to experience fewer workplace challenges. The significant negative relationships suggest that strong professional identity may help migrant Filipino teachers adapt more effectively to communication barriers, socio-cultural adjustments, instructional resource limitations, and perceived professional discrimination. However, compensation disparities appear to affect respondents regardless of professional identity level, suggesting that financial concerns persist despite strong professional commitment. This finding aligns with Quines and Saycon (2023), who emphasized that professional identity serves as a psychological and professional resource promoting resilience and workplace adjustment.

Table 4

Relationship Between Professional Identity and Workplace Challenges

Variable	r_s	p-value	Decision
Overall Professional Identity vs. Overall Workplace Challenges	-0.432	0.000**	Reject H_0
Professional Identity vs. Socio-Cultural Adjustments	-0.396	0.000**	Reject H_0
Professional Identity vs. Compensation Disparities	-0.124	0.125	Accept H_0

* $p < 0.01$

Relationship Between Professional Identity and Demographic Profile

Most demographic variables showed no significant relationship with professional identity. However, significant relationships were found between sex and cultural integration/adaptability ($r_{pb} = -0.158$, $p = 0.049$), area of specialization and professional agency ($r_{pb} = 0.230$, $p = 0.005$), and average monthly income and self-categorization as an educator ($\tau_B = -0.198$, $p = 0.002$). These findings indicate that professional identity is generally independent of demographic characteristics and is shaped more by professional experiences and workplace interactions than demographic factors alone. This aligns with Meyer et al. (2023), who noted that professional identity develops through interaction of personal characteristics, professional preparation, and workplace experiences.

Relationship Between Workplace Challenges and Demographic Profile

Most demographic variables showed no significant relationship with workplace challenges. However, significant relationships were found between age and linguistic/communication barriers ($\tau B = -0.135$, $p = 0.033$), marital status and linguistic/communication barriers ($rpb = -0.202$, $p = 0.012$), marital status and socio-cultural adjustments ($rpb = -0.246$, $p = 0.002$), area of specialization and instructional resource limitations ($rpb = -0.168$, $p = 0.040$), and relevant seminars/trainings attended and perceived professional discrimination ($\tau B = -0.200$, $p = 0.002$). These findings indicate that demographic characteristics have limited influence on workplace challenges overall, though certain characteristics may affect specific challenge dimensions. This aligns with Herrera-Espinoza et al. (2024), who emphasized that demographic and professional characteristics may influence specific aspects of teachers' workplace experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Migrant Filipino teachers in Thailand possess strong professional identity characterized by professional confidence, competence, adaptability, and commitment despite working in a foreign educational environment.
- Workplace challenges are generally manageable; however, compensation disparities and perceived professional discrimination remain significant concerns affecting teachers' professional experiences.
- Professional identity serves as an important protective factor helping migrant Filipino teachers cope with workplace challenges and adapt to multicultural educational settings.
- Selected demographic characteristics influence certain aspects of professional identity and workplace challenges, although most demographic variables do not significantly affect overall professional experiences.
- Professional identity and workplace adjustment are strengthened through workplace inclusion, cultural adaptation, professional development, and organizational support.
- Responsive institutional support programs are essential in promoting professional growth, workplace equity, cultural adjustment, and teacher well-being among migrant Filipino teachers in Thailand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Educational institutions should implement support programs focusing on professional development, mentorship, workplace inclusion, wellness, and cultural adaptation.
- School administrators should review policies on compensation, benefits, and workload distribution to promote fairness and equity among teachers.
- Schools should strengthen inclusive workplace practices and objective evaluation systems to reduce perceived professional discrimination.

- Orientation programs, intercultural training, and Thai language support should be provided to facilitate workplace adjustment and communication.
- Educational institutions should encourage continuous professional development through seminars, workshops, certifications, and training programs.
- Schools should establish wellness initiatives, mentoring systems, and peer-support programs to enhance teachers' emotional well-being and resilience.
- Future researchers may conduct similar studies in other contexts and utilize qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to further explore experiences of migrant Filipino teachers.

Proposed Support Program

Based on the findings, Project KABALIKAT (Kaagapay sa Adaptation, Belongingness, and Leadership for Inclusive Knowledge, Adjustment, and Teaching) is proposed. This comprehensive support program aims to strengthen professional identity, workplace adjustment, emotional well-being, cultural adaptability, and professional resilience of migrant Filipino teachers in Thailand through: (1) Career Support and Workplace Rights Orientation addressing compensation concerns; (2) Workplace Inclusion and Diversity Programs addressing perceived discrimination; (3) Thai Language Classes and Communication Skills Workshops addressing linguistic barriers; (4) Cultural Integration Workshops addressing socio-cultural adjustments; (5) Professional Identity Enhancement and Mentoring Programs strengthening professional identity; (6) Emotional Wellness and Resilience Programs addressing workplace stress; and (7) Career Development and Graduate Studies Orientation promoting long-term professional growth.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

No AI-supported tools were used in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data for this research. All scholarly contributions and intellectual content are attributed solely to the authors.

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