## Time and Tide Wait for None: Understanding and Presenting 'Research Limitations' That Matter

### Dr Ahmed Shahid, Editor

Student researchers as well as established and experienced researchers oftentimes struggle to identify and present valid 'research limitations' in their dissertations or research papers. While every research endeavour is full of varying types and degrees of challenges and pitfalls, from an academic point of view, all of them may not represent judicious research limitations. Therefore, it is essential to be able to discern the more tangible limitations of a research to ensure that they shed light to what really matters.

From the view point of the researcher, there may be a number of theoretical and practical challenges or shortcomings in the research process and its final product. Such challenges could arise from theoretical, methodological, empirical, analytical or other internal limitations of the research as well as from a whole lot of external circumstances and factors, that may affect the validity and generalisability of the research or impede the ability of the researcher to conduct the study effectively. Theoretical limitations could arise due to limited existing literature or theoretical frameworks or their operationalisability within the context of the scope and depth of a research topic. Methodological limitations stem from various constraints in the design of the research, such as sampling limitations, issues of ethics, or demarcations in data collection or experimental setup. Empirical limitations can be associated with limitations in data, such as missing and incomplete data, specific characteristics of sample data against their relevant population parameters, and gaps in data and measurement methods and tools. Analytical limitations arise due to statistical limitations in applying certain required quantitative or qualitative tests due to the nature, size or complexity of the dataset, or lack of an appropriate tool or technique to carry out complex analysis.

The internal limitations of the research outlined above are undoubtedly the most crucial. However, there may be certain external factors which can also 'limit' the rigour and quality of a research output. Environmental factors outside the control of the researcher, such as political upheavals, natural disasters as well as resource limitations for the research project may have a significant impact of constraining the quality or the scope of the research. Additionally, personal factors such as the researcher's health or family circumstances, time constraints (time is relative, as we all know), other work commitments, et cetera, can also impact the research. However (I suppose you can already guess what I am up to!), these personal and environmental factors are the least relevant when it comes to outlining research limitations. Unfortunately, for most of the research students and novice researchers, those same 'mediocre' factors often epitomise the most important research limitations – which by implication, reduces the rigour of the research itself.

This brings me to the rationale behind incorporating 'research limitations' in the first place. The primary aim of acknowledging research limitations is to enhance the precision and thoroughness of the research process, thereby minimising the chance of overlooking gaps or errors. It demonstrates the researcher's understanding of the scope and limitations of the research, showcasing their integrity by voluntarily acknowledging potential theoretical, methodological, empirical, analytical, or other constraints. Moreover, it aids in situating the research within its genuine context and boundaries, facilitating future researchers in addressing these limitations in their studies.

In conclusion, what is quite obvious here is that one researcher's time constraint or personal problems as a research limitation are unlikely, if not improbable, to inspire the reader or any other researcher. Therefore, it makes sense to focus on what really matters when outlining our research limitations.

## In this Issue

# Crafting a Winning Research Grant Proposal

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A successful research grant proposal is not just a document, but a testament to your research vision and capabilities. Crafting a compelling proposal requires unique insights, carefully honed strategies, and a thorough understanding of the key components that make a proposal stand out This guide will empower you with the essential steps and best practices for creating a winning research grant proposal that will impress reviewers and stakeholders. By implementing these strategies, you can increase your chances of securing the funding you need to bring your research vision to fruition.

**Key Strategies**

1.  Compelling Research Question

A compelling research question or hypothesis is at the core of every successful grant proposal. This question must address a significant gap in the existing literature, show potential for innovation, and provide clear avenues for investigation. To identify such a question, researchers must thoroughly investigate the context and perform an initial assessment of their topic area to formulate a research question or hypothesis effectively. This preliminary research phase is crucial as it informs the researcher about the current state of knowledge, ongoing debates, and unresolved questions within the field (Deb et al., 2018). By immersing themselves in the existing research and critically evaluating it, researchers can identify gaps or opportunities for innovation. This groundwork ensures that the chosen research question is relevant and tailored to meet funding bodies' specific interests and criteria, thereby enhancing the proposal's chances of success.

2. Robust Methodology

A well-defined methodology is the backbone of a grant proposal, showcasing the feasibility and rigour of the proposed research. The methodology section is perhaps the most critical component of the grant proposal. This section must be elaborated in detail, demonstrating a clear and logical progression from the research question to the proposed methods of investigation. This thorough coverage is vital because it not only presents the practical steps the researcher will take to address the research question but also showcases the researcher's technical expertise and preparedness to handle the complexities of the project (Crawley & O'Sullivan, 2023). A meticulously detailed methodology reassures reviewers of the proposal's feasibility and the researcher's competence, significantly influencing the decision-making process regarding the allocation of funds. Therefore, this section must align perfectly with the research question and objectives and be robust enough to withstand critical scrutiny, reinforcing the proposal's overall strength and credibility.

3. Significance and Impact

Grant reviewers prioritise projects that advance knowledge, offer clear, practical benefits, and address significant societal issues. Therefore, researchers must articulate the significance and potential impact of their work compellingly within the proposal by delineating how the research could contribute to solving critical problems, advancing important theoretical frameworks, or enhancing practical applications in the field (Cotos, 2019). Including specific examples of potential applications of the research findings or demonstrating how the research could influence policy, improve technologies, or enhance the quality of life for various populations can significantly strengthen the proposal (Crawley & O'Sullivan, 2023). Such examples serve to illustrate the tangible impacts of the research, making the case more compelling to funders who are often looking to invest in projects that have the potential to bring about real-world changes and provide substantial returns on investment.

4. Strong Justification for Funding

In the competitive arena of grant funding, researchers must craft a proposal that stands out due to its intrinsic merits and aligns perfectly with the funding agency's objectives and priorities. Researchers must meticulously demonstrate how their project fills a critical gap in current research or how it applies novel approaches to solve old problems, thus positioning their proposal as a

valuable investment for the funding body (How to Make Your Grant Proposal "Sellable", 2023). Additionally, the alignment of the project with the funding agency's mission must be explicit. Researchers should delve into the specific interests and strategic goals of the agency and draw clear connections to their project, illustrating how their research supports or advances these goals. Furthermore, researchers need to effectively showcase their credentials and capabilities by detailing their history of scholarly productivity, previous successful projects, and specific expertise in the field. It is also beneficial to highlight any unique skills or resources they possess that may give them a competitive edge in executing the proposed research plan (How to Make Your Grant Proposal "Sellable", 2023). By presenting a comprehensive picture of their qualifications and the distinctiveness of their project, researchers can persuasively argue why their proposal should be prioritised over others, thereby enhancing their chances of securing the needed funding

## 5. Engage Stakeholders and Collaborators

Collaboration and stakeholder engagement are indispensable elements that can significantly enhance the strength and impact of a grant proposal. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and engaging with various stakeholders, researchers can tap into diverse perspectives, resources, and expertise that may not be accessible through solitary efforts. Researchers need to identify and involve relevant stakeholders, including community organisations, industry partners, policymakers, and other key players in the field (Browning, 2022). Incorporating collaboration into the proposal demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and partnership and amplifies the project's potential for knowledge mobilisation and real-world application. Researchers should outline how each stakeholder will contribute to the research process, whether through providing access to data or resources, offering specialised expertise, or facilitating dissemination and implementation efforts.

## 6. Clearly Define Budget and Resources

It is essential to outline a thorough budget to demonstrate the planned research's financial feasibility. Researchers must carefully specify the resources required for the study, including staff, equipment, supplies, and travel costs. Moreover, providing a rationale for each budget element by explaining its importance and cost-efficiency will improve transparency and build trust with reviewers regarding responsible fund utilisation and project potential for success (Patil, 2019). Additionally, researchers should consider the ethical implications of their proposed research and address any potential risks or concerns.

## 7. Anticipate and Address Reviewer Concerns

Grant writers are advised to "begin with the end in mind". The primary goal of a grant proposal is to persuade the readers—the grant reviewers—to recommend funding for a project. Understanding the perspectives and priorities of grant reviewers can help researchers anticipate potential concerns and address them proactively in their proposals (Crawley & O'Sullivan, 2023). Researchers should carefully review the funding agency's guidelines and review criteria, tailoring their proposal to align with these expectations. Seeking feedback from colleagues or mentors can provide valuable insights into potential weaknesses or blind spots in the proposal (Consalvey, 2023). Researchers can strengthen their proposal and enhance its competitiveness by preemptively addressing reviewer concerns. Next time you prepare a grant proposal, remember to incorporate strategies that consider the perspectives and responsibilities of the grant reviewers.

## Conclusion

A successful research grant proposal requires a detailed and meticulous approach to each component. It is essential to follow the comprehensive strategies and best practices outlined in this guide, designed to guide you through the intricacies of proposal writing. Doing so significantly increases the likelihood of securing the necessary funding. This funding is crucial for advancing research endeavours and contributing to the academic community and society. Every section of the proposal, from the abstract to the budget, should be carefully constructed to align with the funder's priorities and clearly articulate the importance and feasibility of your research project. Remember, a well-prepared proposal reflects your commitment to the subject and showcases your ability to conduct organised and impactful research. A thoughtful and thorough grant proposal

is more than just a funding request—it is a testament to your research's potential to contribute to broader knowledge and societal benefit. Take this opportunity to refine your ideas, clarify your objectives, and present a vision that others will want to support and invest in.

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A sign of Intelligence is an awareness of one's own ignorance

*Niccolo Machiavelli*

## FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

## Soft Skills Development through Active Learning in Postgraduate Studies: An Action Research Study

*Hidaya Mohamed Zahir*

### Abstract

*The objective of the action research study presented in this paper was to teach postgraduate students the soft skills they find valuable and believe are challenging for them to learn, and to gain knowledge of their learning experience. Convenience sampling was used to recruit fifteen Master of Science in Accounting and Finance (MScAFM) students, who voluntarily enrolled in a stand-alone, soft skills education module offered to them, which was delivered through collaborative learning and case method. The learning approaches and content were designed based on a pre-assessment task where students identified their existing knowledge and learning needs. Data was collected using a survey questionnaire, field observations and semi structured interviews. The findings show that the students in this study most highly valued leadership skills, time management, and communication skills and believed that having these traits will make it easier for them to achieve their goals in both their professional and personal lives. Students found it difficult to use critical thinking skills, and to work collaboratively. They are also unable to transfer their knowledge and skills effectively in work-related situations. Hence, soft skill qualities, such as creativity, adaptability, and collaboration should be developed as part of educational activities that strongly emphasize their practical application in different contexts. Engaging in this action research project gave the students the confidence to have a voice, as was described by the students. Students' voluntary completion rates for the module indicate the high value students place on gaining soft skills.*

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# Introduction to Event-based Pedagogy

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Event-based pedagogy (EBP) is a comprehensive whole-school curriculum implementation model that draws inspiration from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as its theoretical foundation. Originating from Leont'ev's hierarchical structure of activity (Leont've, 1978), EBP innovatively expands this structure by introducing "events" as the highest level in the hierarchy.

According to Leont'ev (1978), activities involve a hierarchical structure consisting of three tiers: activities, actions, and operations, as illustrated in Figure 1. This structure can be understood as follows: activity is an object-oriented and socially mediated process that includes a chain of actions. Actions themselves are conscious, tool-mediated, and goal-oriented steps within the activity, while operations are routinized and thus unconscious elements of actions in response to specific conditions. Leont'ev defined operations as "the methods for accomplishing actions" (Leont'ev, 1978, p. 65).
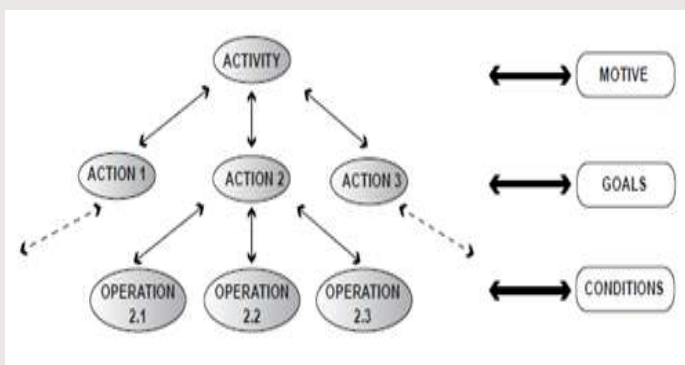


Leont'ev illustrated the hierarchical structure using his well-known example of the primeval collective hunt. In this scenario, an individual's role could be to act as a beater to scare animals and guide them toward other hunters who are waiting in ambush. This example demonstrates the division of labour, highlighting the difference between a person's motivation (e.g., obtaining food) and the goal-directed actions they perform (e.g., making animals run away). Additionally, it showcases the specific conditions in which these actions occur (Leont'ev, 1981).

In the context of learning activities involving interactive whiteboards (IWBs), the hierarchical structure can be applied by explaining mediation as a sequence of operations (e.g., drag and drop, click, scroll, cut and paste, data entry). Initially, these operations require conscious effort as actions. Through practice and internalization, activities transform into actions, which eventually become automatic operations. For instance, a novice user might struggle with accurately dragging and dropping on an IWB due to the conscious effort needed to perform the task. Over time, the user can internalize the process, turning the conscious action into an automatic operation that requires less mental effort. It is important to note the bidirectional nature of the hierarchy, as depicted by the arrows in Figure 1. Operations can revert back to actions, and actions can revert back to activity when disrupted. This dynamic allows for adjustments and changes within the learning process.

The figure 1 illustrates that activities can be composed of multiple actions (e.g., actions 1, 2, & 3), and each action can consist of multiple operations (e.g., operations 2.1, 2.2, & 2.3). This structure is consistent with literature on IWBs (e.g., Kennewell & Beauchamp, 2007), supporting the idea of a hierarchical structure in Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). These principles help explain the interrelationships between operations and conditions, actions and goals, and activities and motives (objects), providing a comprehensive understanding of interactivity around IWBs and supporting the analysis of learning processes.

However, research on curriculum implementation reveals that integrating diverse learning activities from various classes and grade levels fosters collaboration and adds an extra layer of mediation that significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes . By organising these activities as collaborative events across entire grades, students gain a more holistic and interconnected learning experience. This approach facilitates a broader exchange of ideas and perspectives, encouraging students to work together and engage more deeply with the material.

Incorporating this new layer of mediation can be visualized in the conceptual model depicted in Figure 2. This model demonstrates how different classes and grades come together to host and participate in shared events, providing a platform for cross-disciplinary learning and community building within the school environment. This interconnectedness promotes a richer, more dynamic learning atmosphere and fosters stronger relationships among students and teachers across different grade levels and subjects.

enhances the educational experience by situating learning within a broader cultural context. It promotes richer, more authentic interactions among students and teachers, allowing them to navigate the complexity of real-world challenges. This deeper connection with the subject matter leads to a more engaging and holistic educational experience.

Overall, the integration of CHAT and the expansion of Leont'ev's hierarchical structure within EBP create a dynamic and culturally responsive educational
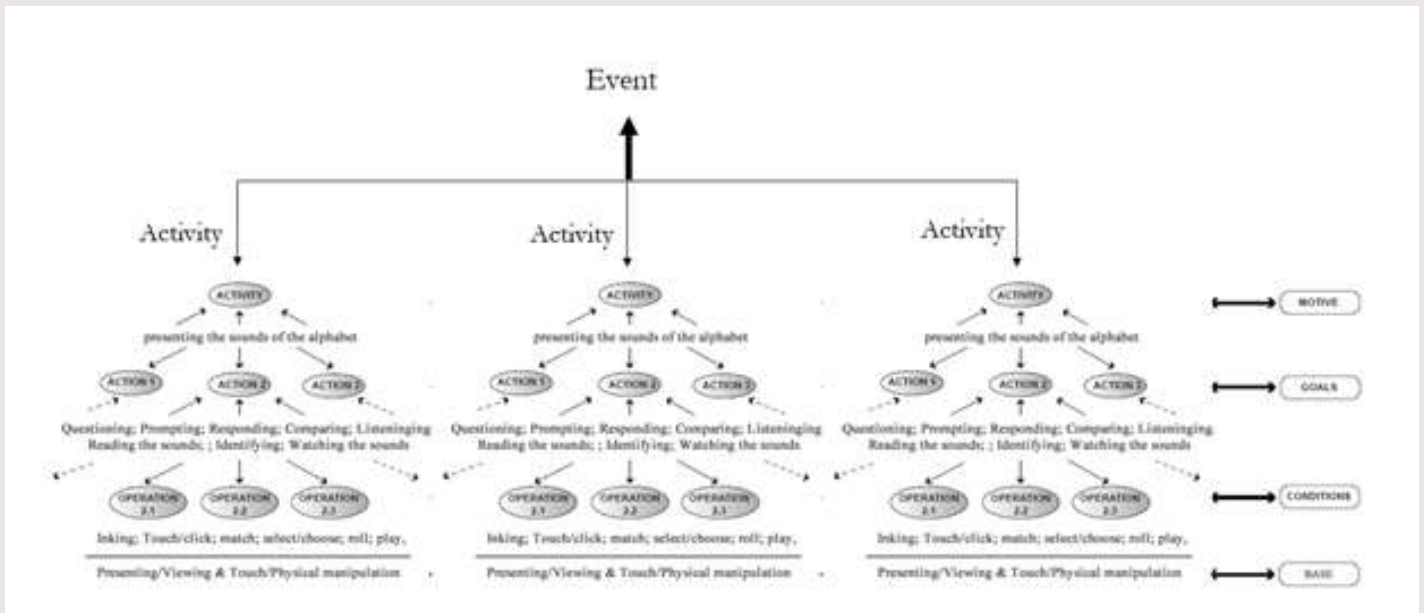
**Figure 2. Hierarchical Structure of Events**

As illustrated in Figure 2, events are positioned at the apex, encompassing a multitude of interconnected activities that occur simultaneously in various classrooms with diverse age groups. This conceptualization transforms the traditional hierarchical structure, acknowledging that events are dynamic and can involve a complex interplay of actions and activities. This expansion aligns with the principles of CHAT, emphasizing the social and cultural context of learning.

By expanding the structure of activity, EBP acknowledges the socially mediated nature of learning. Events within EBP are purposefully crafted to reflect cultural relevance and offer a platform for students to participate in collaborative activities. This approach nurtures an appreciation for diverse perspectives and encourages students to engage with one another in meaningful ways. This integration of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and an expanded structure of activity

framework that emphasizes the importance of events as central organising principles, promoting holistic learning experiences.

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## Job Motivation and Job Performance: A Case Study of the Maldives' Energy Sector Employees

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### Abstract

*Organizations maintain employee motivation in order to increase output and performance. When there is a lack of employee motivation within a company, employees' potential and skills are underutilized and the employees are unable to accomplish organizational goals. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of motivation among staff of an urban electricity company in the Maldives, and to explore the relationship between the job performance and their motivation. A survey questionnaire was used for data collection. The results showed that there is a significant and favorable relationship between employee motivation and performance. However, with a correlation rs (125) =.38, p<.001, these two variables do not appear to be strongly correlated. Further analysis indicates that women had lower motivation than men. This is concerning since women are severely under-represented in the energy sector. Factors which may negatively influence the culture of reciprocity to work beyond work contracts for the benefit of the company, also need to be investigated further.*

# Speak Up: A Pathway for Patient Safety

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'Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change we seek.' (Barack Obama)

## Introduction

While human error is inevitable, it is crucial to develop safer solutions to mitigate the risk and ensure patient safety (Rodziewicz & Hipskind, 2019). Patient safety, a shared responsibility, is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the absence of avoidable harm to patients by healthcare professionals (HCPs). The global impact of patient harm is not just significant, it is staggering. Reports indicate that it results in the loss of [over 64 million disability-adjusted life years annually worldwide], a figure that should alarm us all, and is among the top 10 causes of disability and death (Vaismoradi et al., 2020).

Over the last ten years, researchers in the field of health services have been studying the many forms of organizational culture and how they relate to patient safety and the quality of treatment. They reasoned that cultures characterized by contempt have several detrimental consequences on individuals, including a decreased propensity to voice concerns about workplace issues(Etchegaray et al., 2017). Etchegaray further elaborated that "Speaking up" refers to "the raising of concerns by healthcare professionals for the benefit of patient safety and care quality upon recognizing or becoming aware of risky or deficient actions of others within healthcare teams." Therefore, it is not just important, but crucial that healthcare professionals take the initiative to speak up about the existing problems in the organizations, as their silence could mean missed opportunities to improve and strengthen the culture for patient safety.

## What is patient safety in healthcare?

Patient safety is concerned with avoiding gratuitous and avoidable harm to a patient during the healthcare process and minimizing exposure to unnecessary risk. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) is "the prevention of patient harm". In other words,

healthcare institutes should implement policies and strategies to prevent errors either by omission or commission, learn from the errors that occur in the system, establish ways to minimize and mitigate these events and foster a culture of safety (Tetteh et al., 2022; Syeda, 2020).

In modern medicine, patient safety is a leading healthcare concern. In the years since "To Err is Human," 400,000 patients have died annually from preventable adverse events in healthcare ( D' Angelo et al., 2019). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines patient safety as the " Absence of preventable harm." What is " preventive harm"? This may be subjective, making it difficult to express its true meaning.

Adverse events or incidences and near misses do occur in healthcare settings:

## Case Scenario 1- An incident

A 33-year-old male patient was admitted to a major medical centre for an open femur fracture following a ten-foot fall off a ladder. Although the patient's previous medical history was unremarkable, the repair of the fracture was complicated by an acute vascular injury that required resuscitation following severe blood loss. The primary members of the perioperative team included an attending surgeon, a senior surgical resident, an operating room nurse, a nurse anesthetist, an anesthesiologist, and a surgical technician. On this particular day, the attending surgeon was running late, and the team attempted to expedite the induction of anaesthesia to reduce the delay and ensure the room was closed on time to reduce staff overages. The patient was "fast-tracked" through the preoperative holding area and taken to the room before the attending surgeon arrived. The timeout was performed after induction by the operating room nurse. Unbeknownst to the operating room nurse, the patient's name and medical record number were incorrect. This old label was erroneously placed on the patient chart, which was an oversight that no other team members noticed or cross-checked.

Not only was the patient's name incorrect, but so

was his blood type. Tragically, the otherwise healthy patient unexpectedly died postoperatively due to an acute hemolytic transfusion reaction from the administration of ABO-incompatible blood ( D' Angelo et al., 2019).

### Case Scenario 2- A near-miss case

"A 78-year-old man presented to the hospital with shortness of breath. He was admitted to the medicine service, and a chest radiograph revealed large bilateral pleural effusions. The bedside procedure service was consulted to perform a thoracentesis for diagnostic and treatment purposes. The patient's identification was done using the surname and room number. The doctor was surprised to see a minimal effusion on the right side during the procedure. He explained the situation to the medical team and informed them that he could perform the procedure if clinically indicated. The patient care assistant who overheard the phone exchange followed the doctor out of the room and politely informed him that he had examined the wrong patient.

When the records were double-checked, he was shocked that the correct patient was in the next room. The physician nominated the patient care assistant for the hospital's Stand Up for Safety Award, designed to recognize providers and staff for speaking up and making good catches in the name of patient safety" (Frankel , Adair, & Sexton, 2019).

Unfortunately, incidents do occur in healthcare settings. Therefore, it is essential to build a culture of safety where healthcare professionals (HCPs) speak up when they encounter events at work.

### Importance of speaking up for patient safety in the workplace

"Speaking up" refers to voicing out concerns or disagreement for the safety of the patient by a HCP who becomes aware of another HCP's being incompetent, incorrect diagnosis, dubious clinical judgement,  nonadherence to rules, adopting shortcuts that can impend patient safety(Jeong & Kim, 2023). Medication errors, incorrect hand hygiene, surgery-related adverse events and many other events (Hoffmann et al., 2022) states can lead to compromising of patients' safety and harm to the

patient. Therefore, the primary purpose is to raise the concern and promptly be vocal about it at the right time.

Speaking up is essential to patient safety because it helps capture errors, improve system failures, and promote patient safety and healthcare quality(Alingh et al., 2019). Moreover, it can positively influence interprofessional teamwork, which is vital for the quality of care (Hoffmann et al., 2022). Jeong and Kim (2023) further explain that it is vital for HCPs to be willing to speak up and prevent adverse events when a patient is not receiving ideal treatment. However, despite knowing the importance of speaking up for the sake of patients, most HCPS are reluctant to do so, which remains a significant contributing factor to quality care(Alingh et al., 2019; Jeong & Kim, 2023).

### Barriers to speaking up about patient safety

Even though speaking up is considered vital in healthcare delivery, many studies have revealed that organizational culture can be inexpedient; therefore, HCPs do face lots of challenges when it comes to speaking up for patient safety (Hoffmann et al., 2022; Jaaffar & Samy, 2023; Tetteh et al., 2022).

 According to Hoffmann et al. (2022), the most common barriers include The absence of an audience, power dynamics and authority gradients, fear of damaging relationships and feelings of resignation.  A study by Jeong and Kim (2023) expresses that psychological stability, open communication, and organizational culture contribute to speaking up.

### Conclusion

Healthcare organisations must foster a patient safety culture, create an environment where HCPs can overcome barriers, and encourage speaking up. Speaking up and being open to discussion in critical situations can minimise adverse events and ensure that future patients and HCPs are not exposed to similar risks.

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# Investigating the Relationship between Frequent use of Instagram and Body Image Issues in Young Women

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## Abstract

*Body image is a subjective mental representation that an individual creates about themselves. It may be an unlikely representation of reality. The study aimed to investigate if there is a relationship between frequent use of Instagram and body image issues among young Maldivian women. An online survey questionnaire was shared with 100 Maldivian women aged 19 to 25 who used Instagram. The findings revealed a strong relationship between the use of Instagram and Body image issues r (98) = .765, p<001. Additionally, analysis of Body Checking Questionnaire subscales: idiosyncratic checking rituals, checking specific body parts, comparing overall appearance and frequency of Instagram use showed a positive relationship between all three variables and frequency of Instagram use. The study's findings suggest that frequent use of Instagram negatively impacts the body image of young Maldivian women. Data also showed that usage of Instagram at an addictive level was exceedingly high, at 57%. The study findings have serious implications since international research demonstrates that viewing and uploading edited photos on Instagram can harm young people's perceptions of their body image. Once beauty ideals have been internalised, women self-objectify themselves, focusing on the aesthetics of their body image, for an outside observer, instead of attending to the functionality of their body. The study also highlights the need for understanding the pervasive and complex ways social media influences emerging adults' health and wellbeing and identifies the need for policy intervention to develop young people's awareness of the impact of social media posting habits on self-image.*

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# Literature Analysis: Exploring the Influence of Esports Programs on Student Engagement and Academic Performance in Higher Education

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## Introduction

Esports, or competitive video gaming, has surged in popularity in recent years, evolving from a niche hobby into a global phenomenon with millions of enthusiasts and a multi-billion-dollar industry (Zhang et al., 2023). This exponential growth has not only transformed the landscape of entertainment but has also caught the attention of educators and policymakers, who recognize the potential of esports programs to engage students, foster community, and enhance learning outcomes within higher education settings (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017).

In higher education institutions worldwide, esports programs are increasingly viewed to attract and retain students, particularly those with a passion for gaming and digital culture. Esports clubs, teams, and leagues have become fixtures on college campuses, offering students opportunities to compete, socialize, and develop valuable skills in a supportive and competitive environment. However, the impact of esports on student engagement and academic performance remains a topic of debate and empirical investigation.

This research aims to address this gap in the literature by exploring the impact of esports programs on student engagement and academic performance in higher education. Drawing on existing research the study seeks to understand the complex interplay between esports participation and student outcomes, shedding light on both the benefits and challenges associated with integrating esports into higher education curricula and campus life. By synthesizing findings from multiple studies and perspectives, this research seeks to provide educators, administrators, and policymakers with evidence-based insights and recommendations for maximizing the potential of esports programs to support student success and well-being in higher education settings.

## Methodology

The articles selected for this literature analysis were obtained through a systematic search of academic databases. Keywords such as "esports," "student engagement," "academic performance," and "higher education" were used to identify relevant studies published between 2012 and 2023. Only peer-reviewed articles written in English were considered for inclusion.

Articles were included based on their focus on the impact of esports programs on student engagement and academic performance in higher education settings. Studies that provided empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, or critical analyses were prioritized.

The selected articles were then analysed thematically to identify key findings and trends related to student engagement, academic performance, skill development, social and psychological impacts, infrastructure, diversity, and inclusion within esports programs. The synthesized results are presented in the following sections.

## Results and Discussion

### Student Engagement and Esports Participation

The literature analysis revealed a consistent pattern indicating that participation in esports programs positively influences student engagement within higher education settings. Students involved in esports clubs, teams, and leagues reported heightened levels of school connectedness, academic motivation, and a sense of belonging compared to non-participants (Karakoc et al., 2022). This suggests that esports communities provide students with opportunities for social interaction, skill development, and identity formation, contributing to a more engaging academic experience.

Furthermore, the sense of camaraderie and teamwork fostered within esports environments extends beyond the gaming arena, enhancing students' overall sense of community within their academic institution. The supportive and competitive nature of esports programs creates a space where students can develop meaningful relationships, collaborate on shared goals, and feel valued within their peer group (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Thus, esports participation appears to play a significant role in promoting student engagement and building a positive campus culture.

## Academic Performance and Esports Involvement

The relationship between esports involvement and academic performance is a topic of ongoing debate and investigation. While some studies have found no significant correlation between esports participation and grades (Chan et al., 2022), others have reported mixed findings.

For instance, Rothwell and Shaffer (2019) conducted a comprehensive review of esports in K-12 and post-secondary schools. They explored the various ways in which esports programs are integrated into educational settings, examining their potential impact on academic success. Their analysis revealed a diverse range of approaches, including esports as a form of extracurricular activity, an educational tool, and even as a competitive sport. The review identified several potential benefits of esports participation, such as promoting teamwork, strategic thinking, and problem-solving skills. However, it also acknowledged concerns about potential negative effects, such as increased screen time and distraction from academic responsibilities.

This comprehensive review underscores the need for further research to better understand the complex relationship between esports participation and academic outcomes. By examining the experiences and perceptions of students participating in esports programs across different educational levels, future studies can provide valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges of integrating esports into educational settings.

## Skill Development and Transferable Skills

Esports participation offers students valuable opportunities for skill development in areas such as teamwork, communication, strategic thinking, and time management (Hamari et al., 2020). These skills are not only essential for success in competitive gaming but also highly transferable to academic and professional settings (Connolly et al., 2012).

By engaging in competitive gaming and collaborating with teammates, students develop critical skills that enhance their academic performance and prepare them for future career endeavours. For example, the ability to communicate effectively, make strategic decisions under pressure, and adapt to dynamic environments are all competencies that are highly valued in various academic disciplines and industries (Hamari et al.,

2014).

Integrating esports programs into higher education curricula can provide students with experiential learning opportunities to further develop these skills in a practical context. By incorporating esports-related coursework, projects, or internships, institutions can better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce while capitalizing on their interests and talents in gaming.

## Social and Psychological Impacts

While participation in esports communities can foster social connections and support networks, it also presents potential risks to students' mental health and well-being. Excessive gaming has been associated with issues such as gaming addiction, social isolation, and poor mental health outcomes (Tang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024).

Therefore, it is essential for higher education institutions to promote responsible gaming behaviours and provide resources for students experiencing gaming-related issues. This may include offering counselling services, organizing workshops on healthy gaming habits, and establishing peer support groups within esports programs.

Creating inclusive and supportive environments within esports communities is also crucial for mitigating potential risks and enhancing students' overall well-being. By prioritizing diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as mentorship programs, scholarships, and targeted outreach efforts, institutions can ensure that esports programs are accessible and welcoming to students from all backgrounds (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017).

Overall, the results and discussions highlight the multifaceted nature of the impact of esports programs on student engagement and academic performance in higher education. While esports participation offers opportunities for social interaction, skill development, and identity formation, it also presents challenges such as balancing gaming and academic responsibilities and managing potential negative impacts on mental health. By considering diverse perspectives and experiences, higher education institutions can develop strategies to maximize the benefits of esports programs while minimizing risks.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the comprehensive examination of the literature on the influence of esports programs on student engagement and academic performance in higher education reveals a complex interplay of factors. While esports participation has demonstrated positive effects on student engagement, including heightened levels of school connectedness, academic motivation, and a sense of belonging, its impact on academic performance is nuanced, with mixed findings reported.

The findings underscore the importance of recognizing the multifaceted nature of esports involvement, which offers opportunities for skill development in areas such as teamwork, communication, and strategic thinking, while also posing potential risks to students' mental health and well-being. Integrating esports programs into higher education curricula presents an opportunity to capitalize on students' interests and talents in gaming, providing experiential learning opportunities that enhance their academic and professional skill sets.

However, it is crucial for institutions to prioritize the creation of inclusive and supportive environments within esports communities, promoting responsible gaming behaviours and providing resources for students facing gaming-related issues. By considering diverse perspectives and experiences, higher education institutions can develop evidence-based strategies to maximize the benefits of esports programs while minimizing risks, ultimately fostering an environment that supports student success and well-being.

Overall, while esports programs offer promising avenues for enhancing student engagement and skill development, their implementation must be approached thoughtfully, with careful consideration of the potential challenges and opportunities they present. By advancing our understanding of the role of esports in higher education and implementing evidence-based practices, we can create inclusive and supportive environments that promote student success and well-being.

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VILLA COLLEGE

## FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH
## Skilled Immigrants, Firms, and the Global Geography of Innovation

*Britta Glenon*

## Abstract

*This article begins with an overview of the policy environment in the United States and abroad for skilled immigration, with a particular focus on "supply-driven" versus "demand-driven" systems. The overview emphasizes that firms play a central role in the skilled immigration process in most countries. I then survey the ample evidence that skilled immigrants have a strong positive effect on firm outcomes, followed by a discussion of the many margins of adjustment that firms have when their access to skilled immigrants is affected by national immigration policy. Finally, given such margins of adjustment and the importance of skilled immigrants to firms, I consider how the policies that affect skilled migration shape the global geography and quality of innovation. I conclude by discussing policy implications and open questions. In particular, I emphasize that evaluations of the impact of skilled immigration should not be constrained within borders: immigration flows and national immigration policies affect the global geography of innovation and investment.*

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