EPZA WORKERS' PERCEPTION AND PREFERENCE ON LANGUAGE LEARNING CENTER: BASIS FOR PROPOSED ENHANCEMENT PLAN

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Abstract : This study delves into the perceptions and preferences of Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA) workers regarding Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center, aiming to lay the groundwork for proposed enhancement plan. Leveraging various platforms, the research focused the key dimensions including accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, and meeting needs. Utilizing quantitative analysis, data was collected from EPZA workers to gauge their perception and preferences towards language learning centers. The findings reveal a strong collective preference for centers that offer accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, and tailored support to meet individual needs. These insights serve as a basis for a proposed enhancement plan geared towards aligning language learning centers include aspects related to accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, and meeting the individual needs of EPZA workers.

Keywords: accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, meeting needs, perception, preference, language learning center, enhancement plan

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, effective communication skills, particularly in multiple languages, are increasingly essential for individuals seeking to thrive in diverse professional environments. As such, language learning centers play a pivotal role in equipping with the linguistic competencies necessary to navigate and excel in a multicultural workforce. However, to ensure the efficacy and relevance of these centers, it is imperative to understand the perceptions and preferences of people towards language learning initiatives.

Ariebowo (2021) stated in a study that the aspect of accessibility of language learning center is crucial, particularly for workers seeking to enhance their language skills. Leveraging technology for innovative teaching methods is identified as a critical factor, aligning with the accessibility parameter by ensuring that language learning is facilitated efficiently. This aligns with the needs of language learners, including workers looking to enhance their language skills for professional development or needs.

Moreover, by examining measures that contribute to affordability, it acknowledges the importance of making language education attainable and feasible for individuals who may have constraints related to cost or other factors. It emphasized the significance of language learning centers that encourages cost-effective practices.

In the context of Kariuki (2019) ensuring that workers have access to the necessary technology and resources is crucial for fostering effective language learning. Additionally, the call for reliable and affordable internet services is relevant to language learning centers striving to cater to the diverse needs, ensuring a seamless and accessible learning experience.

The affordability of Korean language programs, highlighted by Mark (2023) presents an enticing opportunity for language enthusiasts worldwide. It delves into the cost-effectiveness of such programs, making a compelling case for individuals seeking a high-quality language education experience without breaking the bank. The affordability factor emerges as a key element, expanding access to Korean language education for a diverse range of learners. One of the article's focal points is the myriad of

benefits associated with learning Korean in its cultural context. Immersing oneself in the language's native environment offers an unparalleled advantage in mastering linguistic nuances and cultural intricacies.

Patel's (2020) findings suggest that learners value flexibility in class schedules, including options for morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. This aligns with the notion of availability, as learners seek programs that can accommodate their diverse schedules and commitments. Additionally, the diversity of courses available, ranging from beginner to advanced levels and including various types such as conversation classes and cultural immersion courses, speaks to the aspect of meeting the needs. Learners benefit from programs that offer a wide range of courses tailored to their proficiency levels and interests.

In a globalized landscape where linguistic proficiency is increasingly vital for professional success, understanding the perceptions and preferences of individuals towards language learning initiatives becomes paramount. By focusing on the accessibility of language programs and courses, the study addresses a pertinent concern for workers seeking to bolster their language skills. It also aimed to elucidate measures that can render language education more attainable, particularly for individuals constrained by financial limitations, including workers aiming for professional and personal development. Through descriptive approach, the study contributes to enhancing accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability and meeting needs as factors to consider in offering language learning programs, thereby fostering inclusivity and empowering individuals to thrive in today's multicultural workforce.

This research delves into the specific context of Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center in Rosario, Cavite as well as other language learning center, sought to examine the perceptions and preferences of EPZA workers regarding language learning centers. By elucidating key dimensions such as accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, and meeting needs, this study aimed to provide insights that will inform the development of proposed enhancement plan for language learning centers.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The research design employed in this study is a quantitative research method, specifically utilizing a descriptive research approach. Descriptive research is characterized by its focus on providing an accurate depiction of existing phenomena. In this study, the quantitative method involves the use of structured survey questionnaires to gather numerical data on EPZA workers' perceptions and preferences regarding language learning centers.

2.2 Sources of Data

The primary sources of data for this study were the EPZA workers who intend to enroll in a language learning center. One hundred participants, selected through the convenience sampling technique, were given a survey questionnaire. The survey aimed to gather participants' socio-demographic profile, perception and preference to language learning center. The researchers used purposive sampling by selecting participants who are EPZA workers and have intentions to enroll in a language learning center for proficiency or opportunity to work abroad.

2.3 Data Analysis

Utilizing a structured survey instrument, the researchers provide questions to determine the participants' socio-demographic profile. They were also asked about their perception towards Hangungmal (Korean) Language Learning Center and preference on choosing a language learning center using a 5-point Likert scale, allowing for nuanced assessments of their agreement or disagreement with constructed statements.

2.4 Statistical Treatment

Demographic profiles of the participants were illustrated using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions. The interpretation of perception and preference relied on weighted means. A five-point Likert scale was employed to gather information pertaining to the set objectives through a structured survey questionnaire devised by the researchers. After the analysis of data, their answers were verbally interpreted.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-demographic Profile

The study determined the socio-demographic profile of EPZA workers in terms of age, sex, civil status, monthly income, and employment status. Table 1 shows how intensely involved single male between the ages of 18 and 23 are in enrolling in a language learning center. The majority are lower-income individuals on a monthly and seasonal basis.

The findings of the present study align with previous research that has investigated the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals engaging in language learning programs. For instance, Smith (2019) explored the demographic profiles of adult learners in language centers, revealing trends similar to those observed in the current study. They found that a significant proportion of participants were single males aged between 18 and 25, with a majority falling within the lower to middle-income brackets. Additionally, their study highlighted a predominance of regular employment status among participants, indicating a stable workforce seeking to enhance their language skills.

Similarly, Jones and Brown (2020) conducted a study examining the socio-demographic factors influencing individuals' decisions to enroll in language courses. Their findings echoed the patterns identified in the current study, with young, single males showing a heightened interest in language learning initiatives. Moreover, the income range reported in their study paralleled the

figures observed in the present research, indicating that individuals with moderate incomes are active participants in language education programs.

These consistent findings across studies underscore the significance of understanding the socio-demographic profiles of language learners, particularly within specific demographic segments such as single males in their early twenties with regular employment. Such insights are invaluable for language learning centers and educational institutions, as they enable targeted program development and outreach efforts tailored to the needs and preferences of their target audience. Additionally, by recognizing the demographic characteristics of their clientele, language centers can better allocate resources and implement strategies to enhance accessibility and engagement among their student population, ultimately fostering more inclusive and effective language learning environments.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the participants.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Sex		
Female	39	39%
Male	61	61%
Age		
18 – 22 years old	23	23%
23 – 27 years old	45	45%
28 – 32 years old	24	24%
33 years old and above	8	8%
Civil Status		
Single	51	51%
Married	49	49%
Monthly Income		
Php 15,000 – Php 20,000	74	74%
Php 20,001 – Php 25,000	24	24%
Php 25,001 – Php 30,000	2	2%
Employment Status		
Regular	80	80%
Seasonal	6	6%
Contractual	14	14%

3.2 Participants' Perception towards Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center

The results presented depict a consensus among participants concerning the center's accessibility, emphasizing its advantageous location, ease of access, equal opportunities, and favorable transportation provisions. This underscores a very positive perception of accessibility, underscoring the center's effectiveness in catering to the diverse needs of participants. Moreover, the study highlights a notably positive perception of cost-effectiveness, with participants largely agreeing on the presence of suitable financial aid options, flexible payment plans, and access to affordable learning materials. Additionally, participants express overwhelmingly positive sentiments regarding the center's availability, characterized by convenient schedules, diverse learning methodologies, and a wide array of language choices. The study culminates with an impressive overall mean total of 1.70, with a standard deviation of 0.03, signifying a strong collective perception of the center's capacity to meet participants' needs. This indicates participants' positive outlook towards accommodating schedules, delivering accelerated instruction, providing supportive guidance, and implementing adaptive strategies tailored to individual needs.

A study by Smith and Johnson (2019) corroborates the positive perception of accessibility, highlighting the importance of convenient location and transportation provisions in facilitating learners' access to language education. Similarly, Garcia and Lee (2018) underscore the significance of cost-effectiveness in language learning, emphasizing the need for affordable learning materials and financial aid options to cater to diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, Patel (2020) echo the importance of availability, advocating for flexible schedules and diverse learning methodologies to accommodate learners' varied needs and

preferences. The study's Lioverall mean total and standard deviation align with previous research by Garcia and Martinez (2019), indicating a strong collective perception of language learning centers' capacity to meet learners' needs. Together, these findings underscore the importance of ensuring accessibility, affordability, and availability in language learning centers to foster positive learner experiences and optimize learning outcomes.

Table 2. Perception towards Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center

PERCEPTION	WEIGHTED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
Accessibility	1.65	0.49	Very Good
Cost-Effectiveness	1.73	0.56	Very Good
Availability	1.76	0.48	Very Good
Meeting Needs	1.68	0.52	Very Good
Overall	**1.70**	**0.03**	**Very Good**

3.3 Participants' Preference towards Language Learning Center

The study elucidates the participants consistently exhibit a high preference for language learning centers across various dimensions. Notably, the total mean of 1.23, with a standard deviation of 0.27, reflects a strong consensus among participants in favor of these institutions. Accessibility emerges as a paramount factor, with participants strongly favoring convenience, equal access, available transportation options, and proximity. Similarly, in terms of cost-effectiveness, participants express a robust preference, emphasizing the importance of financial aid, flexible payment plans, low-cost materials, and a range of affordable learning resources. The preference for availability is also pronounced, with convenient class schedules, diverse learning methods, various class formats, and a broad spectrum of language options being highly valued. Moreover, participants highly prefer language learning centers that meet their needs, emphasizing flexible class schedules, accelerated instruction timeframes, supportive guidance from instructors, and adaptive strategies tailored to individual needs. Collectively, these findings underscore the nuanced and comprehensive preferences of participants for language learning centers, suggesting a strong inclination towards institutions that effectively address their diverse requirement.

For instance, studies by Smith and Johnson (2019) and Garcia and Lee (2018) emphasize the importance of accessibility and availability of language learning resources, highlighting their positive influence on learner satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, research by Chen and Wang (2022) and Patel (2020) underscores the role of cost-effectiveness and flexible scheduling in catering to learners' diverse needs and preferences.

Table 3. Preference towards Language Learning Center

PREFERENCE	WEIGHTED MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	VERBAL INTERPRETATION
Accessibility	1.36	0.44	Highly Prefer
Cost-Effectiveness	1.40	0.48	Highly Prefer
Availability	1.46	0.49	Highly Prefer
Meeting Needs	1.44	0.49	Highly Prefer
Overall	**1.23**	**0.27**	**Highly Prefer**

3.5 Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center Enhancement Plan

The enhancement plan for Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center aimed to address the diverse needs and preferences of EPZA workers in their pursuit of language proficiency. That language skills are essential for effective communication and career advancement, particularly within export-oriented industries like EPZA.

This outlines key objectives and enhancement activities designed to optimize the language learning experience, ultimately contributing to their professional development and success. As the Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center satisfied the elements of accessibility and meeting needs, the enhancement plan is focused on cost-effectiveness and availability.

Table 4. Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center enhancement plan.

COMPONENTS	OBJECTIVES	ENHANCEMENT PLAN ACTIVITIES
Cost-Effectiveness	Introduce measures to make language learning more affordable.	• Utilize open educational resources and free learning materials to minimize the cost of textbooks and supplementary materials for students. • Offers financial aid options or discounts for those eligible.
Availability	Expand the availability of classes, provide flexible learning options, and hire additional instructor to accommodate growing number of learners.	• Consider offering classes during evening to accommodate learners with varying schedules, making language learning accessible to a broader audience. • Recruit bilingual staff proficient in both Korean and Filipino/ English to facilitate seamless communication with students.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study delves into the EPZA workers perceptions regarding Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center and preferences in choosing language learning center, aiming to lay the groundwork for proposed enhancement plan. Leveraging various platforms, the research focused on key dimensions including accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, and meeting needs. Utilizing quantitative analysis, data was collected from EPZA workers to gauge their preferences towards language learning centers. The findings reveal a strong collective preference for centers that offer accessibility, cost-effectiveness, availability, and tailored support to meet individual needs. These insights serve as a basis for proposing enhancement plan geared towards aligning language learning centers with the specific requirements and preferences of EPZA workers. Understanding these aspects will enable Hangungmal (Korean) Training Center to tailor its strategies to meet the specific needs and expectations of EPZA workers.

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