The Relationship Between Power Distance Cultural Dimension and Organizational Assimilation of Filipino Online ESL Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation among online English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. It determined the relationship of Hofstede's power distance to Jablin's organizational assimilation. A total of 162 respondents working as office-based online English teachers in Metro Manila participated in the study. Results showed that the respondents had a moderate level of assimilation with a mean score of 119.01. As to the power distance, the respondents had a high level of power distance with a 59.05 mean score, which agrees with Hofstede et al. (2010) that the Philippines is a high power distance society. Correlation test results revealed that power distance and organizational assimilation have a weak positive yet significant relationship with rho = 0.251 and a p-value = 0.002, which means members have a possibility to assimilate easily if high power distance is present in the organization. Correlational tests were also conducted to see if there are significant relationships between sociodemographic variables and power distance and organizational assimilation but no significant relationships were found between the variables mentioned. Personal interviews were conducted to deepen the analysis of the study. Different factors were determined that influenced the assimilation in connection to power distance, and these are personality, relationship, age, and family and affiliation. Influences of power distance on assimilation were also determined. These are saturation point and disengagement, compromise and retaliation, and being outspoken.

Keywords: *Organizational Communication, Assimilation, Power Distance, Intercultural Communication, ESL Teachers*

Introduction

In the Philippines, a typical formal organization has a set of characteristics that describe how functions, statuses, and decision-making prerogatives are allocated among the members of the organization. In general, people in authority in the Philippines are addressed by their titles. Organizations are also governed by sanctioned rules and regulations (Arce & Poblador, 1977). According to Commisceo (n.d.), a hierarchy is observed in different organizations in the Philippines where there is a need to maintain formality through using honorifics and titles in connection to positions, and relationships.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) industry in the Philippines is a preferred choice for non-English speaking students who want to learn English because of the country's competitiveness over the United States and the United Kingdom. The ESL industry started to be known by putting up different learning centers in the world most especially in Asia in 2000 (Llego, n.d.). There was a sudden spike in ESL companies in the Philippines which started in Metro Manila, Baguio City, Cebu City, and Davao City (Ramirez, 2010). Because of the demand, there were 20,000 vacant positions of ESL teachers during the early part of 2020, according to Philip Gioca, JobStreet country manager (Hernandez, 2020).

In every organization, an employee undergoes a process which is called assimilation. According to Jablin (2001), organizational assimilation involves methods where members of an organization adapt to the organizational culture. ESL companies, specifically the office-based setting, also follow an organizational setup from the general manager, shift manager, assistant shift managers, and team leaders down to the ESL teachers. With this setup, there are differences of culture and differences of ways of adapting the organizational culture. According to Hofstede (2011), one of the six dimensions of cultures that organizations have is power distance which refers to the power inequality between superiors and subordinates.

This research attempts to answer the following objectives:
- To determine the level of power distance cultural dimension of online ESL teachers
- To determine the overall level of organizational assimilation of online ESL teachers
- To determine the relationship between the power distance cultural dimension and organizational assimilation of online ESL teachers
- To identify the factors affecting the relationship between power distance cultural dimension and organizational assimilation
- To analyze the factors affecting the relationship between power distance cultural dimension and organizational assimilation

- To identify the influence of power distance on the assimilation of Filipino employees working in the Philippines

Theories and Review of Related Literature

This section discusses the related literature which focuses on studies about power distance and organizational assimilation. This also explains the concepts and theories used which are the power distance cultural dimension and the organizational assimilation theory.

Power Distance

According to Hofstede (2011), power distance is "the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede 2011, p. 9). Hofstede (2011) states that there are two categories of power distance: (a) high power distance index and (b) low power distance or small power distance index. High power distance societies believe that "power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil; its legitimacy is irrelevant..." (p. 9). This means that people in this society believe that there is a huge gap between people in power and the less powerful. On the other hand, the "use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil..." (p. 9) is manifested in low power distance societies. Hofstede et al. (2010) assert that countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa are considered to be high power distance countries while Germanic and English-speaking Western countries belong to low power distance. According to their study, the Philippines is considered to be a high-power distance country.

In the power distance dimension, some studies show the negative effects of having a high-power distance and the positive effects of having a low power distance. Din et al. (2014) found that power distance has a relationship with employee motivation and organizational commitment. This illustrates a stronger relationship in a low power distance culture because of a democratic style of management, equality of employees, and a friendly environment. Furthermore, power distance affects employees' empowerment and team participation. It also shows that employees in lower power distance environments are more empowered and are engaged in team activities (Zhang & Begley, 2011). In fact, the greater the power distance is, the less explorative the people are (Rodriguez & Hechanova, 2014).

On the other hand, some studies affirm the positive impact of high power distance. Wei et al. (2017) assert that due to high power distance, employees prefer likable managers which makes them easier to assimilate. Moreover, Aquino et al. (2006) argue that members' establishing good relations with their leaders proves to be beneficial since leaders have access to useful assets.

Organizational Assimilation Theory

The adjustment of an employee or a member of a certain company or organization is the inspiration of Frederic M. Jablin in devising the Organizational Assimilation Theory. Jablin (2001) defines organizational assimilation as "the processes by which individuals become integrated into the culture of an organization" (p. 755). It is composed of three different stages: anticipatory socialization, organizational encounter, and metamorphosis (Jablin, 1987). Anticipatory socialization is where the individual prepares as they enter the organization. When an employee faces their role in the organization, they are in the organizational encounter (Berlew & Hall, 1966). The last stage of the assimilation process is the metamorphosis. In this stage, the employee utilizes different strategies to become fully part of the organization (Jablin, 1985). On the other hand, if a member does not assimilate, they will choose to take Organizational Exit. This is where the organizational membership ends as the employee quits, retires, or leaves the organization (Jablin, 1987).

Different studies show how cultural dimensions affect an employee's assimilation into the organization. It also shows the importance of being assimilated into an organization to which an individual belongs. Being assimilated results in the efficiency and effectiveness of an employee in the company they work for. Studies show different ways for the employee to be fully integrated into an organization. Some scholars believe that a person can easily assimilate if they know more about the organization they belong to (Mitus, 2006; Robinson, 2003; Church, 2014; McHan, 2015; Sandor, 2014; Cancino, 2014). This is possible if there is an effort to reach out from the organization through the superiors to the employees. This results in being committed to their jobs. More communication should also happen (Korte, 2007; Zhang et al., 2014). In having communication, disclosure and being open to others occur (Jamandre, 2011; Jamandre & Arce, 2011; Croucher et al., 2016).

Using Gailliard et al.'s (2010) Organizational Assimilation Index, Goldman and Myers (2014) assert that employees can easily express their dissent if they are acculturated into the organization. Assimilation also happens during internship specifically with familiarity with co-workers, familiarity with supervisors, recognition, job competency, and role negotiation (Dailey, 2014). Meanwhile, telecommuters or those working at home assimilate more than those who are working in the office because they exert more effort to cope with their being not physically inside the company (Zaman, 2015). Moreover, being acculturated is also a way employees cope with stress (Hristova, 2016).

Hypothesis

Based on previous studies and the assumption of the theories that were used which pertain to the power distance cultural dimension in the Philippine context, the researcher formulated this hypothesis:

H1. There is a negative relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation.

This means that if power distance is high, the organizational assimilation is low, or if power distance is low, the organizational assimilation is high.

Methodology

This study mainly employs a quantitative approach to identify the relationship between organizational assimilation and power distance of Filipino online ESL teachers in the Philippines. A qualitative approach was also integrated to strengthen further and examine the implications of the data in a more detailed manner. Research using mixed methods can aid in understanding the variables under study since both quantitative and qualitative approaches provide empirical information on the company's organizational culture.

The entire population of ESL teachers in the selected company was invited to participate in the study. During the duration of the research, the respondents were all regular employees who had been employed for at least six months. The researcher used two research instruments in one survey, namely (1) Gailliard et al.'s (2010) Multidimensional Organizational Assimilation Index measure, which is a modified Organizational Assimilation Index measure by Myers and Oetzel (2003), and (2) Del Villar's (2013) Power Distance Cultural Orientation Questionnaire. The respondents answered this through a printed survey form.

Del Villar's (2013) Power Distance Cultural Orientation Questionnaire was used to determine online ESL teachers' dominant dimension when it comes to power distance. This scale is composed of 15 items using a 5-point Likert scale with scores of 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. To determine the level of power distance, scores were arbitrarily classified as high-power distance, moderate-power distance, and low-power distance. The mean average from the raw data was generated and analyzed as follows: 55 to 75 for high power distance, 35 to 54 for moderate power distance, and 15 to 34 for low power distance.

Gailliard et al.'s (2010) Multidimensional Organizational Assimilation Index measure was used to determine the level of assimilation of online ESL teachers. This instrument comprises 24 items. It is a 7-point Likert scale with scores of 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for more or less disagree, 4 is neutral or

undecided, 5 for more or less agree, 6 for agree, and 7 for strongly agree. To know the level of assimilation of the online ESL teachers, the researcher arbitrarily classified the scores as high assimilation, moderate assimilation, and low assimilation. The raw data from their answers were averaged to get the mean score and were analyzed as follows: 120 to 168 for high assimilation, 71 to 119 for moderate assimilation, and 24 to 70 for low assimilation.

The survey instruments were further subjected to a reliability test in addition to the existing reliability scores. The reliability score generated for this test is α=0.860 in the Cronbach's Alpha Test which is a preferred reliability score. According to Cortina (1993), 0.70 is acceptable, and 0.80 or greater is preferred.

Personal interviews were conducted after working hours and depending on the willingness to participate and the availability of the online ESL teachers. Using thematic analysis, their answers were categorized into prevailing themes. The guide questions were meant to probe responses regarding their experiences in adapting to the organization's culture, the influence of different cultural dimensions in their process of assimilation, their insights on why they still stay in the company, and their thoughts on what would make them resign from their current ESL company in connection with power distance.

Sociodemographic Profile

In total, 162 out of 180 employees were able to return the answered questionnaires during the first stage of the data gathering which is the collection of survey responses. 153 returned questionnaires were valid. The other four questionnaires were not included because of a lack of answers, two had incomplete demographics, one respondent answered neutral in all items, and two surveys were not submitted on the deadline set.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Percentage	Frequency (%)
AGE		
18-20	5	3.26
21-23	29	18.95
24-26	44	28.76
27-29	30	19.61
30-32	14	9.15
33-35	10	6.54
36-38	6	3.92

Demographic Variable	Percentage	Frequency (%)
AGE		
39-41	6	3.92
42-44	2	1.31
45+	7	4.58
Sex Assigned at Birth		
Female	118	77.1
Male	35	22.9
Educational Attainment		
College partial	39	25.5
College completed	109	71.2
Graduate level partial	5	3.3
Previous ESL Teaching Experience		
With previous ESL experience	93	60.8
Without previous ESL experience	60	39.2
Years in the Company		
6 months	9	5.9
7 months – 9 months	18	11.8
10 months – 12 months	17	11.1
13 months – 15 months	26	17
16 months – 18 months	12	7.8
More than 18 months	71	46.4

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of respondents in terms of age, sex assigned at birth, educational attainment, previous ESL teaching experience, and number of years in the company.

Moreover, interviews were done to add more depth to the study. The interviews were conducted depending on the willingness to participate and the availability of the online ESL teachers. The researcher conducted seven personal interviews. For the sake of anonymity, the interviewees were labeled as Teacher A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Teacher A and Teacher C are males while Teacher B, D, E, F, and G are all females. Teacher A, Teacher E, and Teacher F are highly assimilated based on their mean scores. Teachers B, C, D, and G are moderately assimilated.

Results and Discussions

In this section, a comprehensive exploration of the study's findings is presented, featuring detailed analyses and interpretations of both quantitative data derived from statistical tests aligned with the research objectives and qualitative data collected from the questionnaire.

Level of Power Distance

Based on the results generated, the mean power distance score is 59.05 (SD=6.51) which means that online ESL teachers have high-power distance. Hofstede (1980) argues that Filipinos belong to a high-power distance society. With a mean score of 59.05, this study implies that Filipinos belong to a high-power distance culture. This study agrees with the studies of Del Villar (2012), Del Villar (2015), and Acuna and Rodriguez (1995).

Table 2

Mean Score and Interpretation for Power Distance

Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Interpretation
59.05	59.00	6.51	41.00	74.00	High power distance

Power distance is observed when power and authority are natural and accepted, and those who hold important positions see themselves as privileged (Del Villar, 2013). Titles are always attached to the names of people in authority, and they prefer to be called as such rather than their first names (Del Villar, 2015). This means that titles and honorifics are given importance.

Meanwhile, this study does not agree with previous research which suggest that Filipinos belong to a moderate-level of power distance culture (Del Villar, 2013; Ramirez, 2017).

Level of Organizational Assimilation

Based on the mean score generated, the mean organizational assimilation score among online ESL teachers is 119.01 (SD =17.74).

Table 3

Mean Score and Interpretation for Organizational Assimilation

Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Interpretation
119.01	120.00	17.74	62.00	157.00	Moderate Assimilation

Results show that online ESL teachers have a moderate level of assimilation based on the arbitrary classification.

The Relationship between Power Distance and Organizational Assimilation

Based on a Spearman correlation implemented, there is a weak positive yet significant correlation between power distance and organizational assimilation with rho = 0.251 and a p-value = 0.002 with the accepted level of significance at p-value = 0.05. Although the relationship between the two variables is weak, there is a possibility that members assimilate easily if high power distance is present in the organization.

Table 4

Correlation Scores and Interpretations for Power Distance and Assimilation

Spearman's rho	p-value	Interpretation
0.251	0.002	There is a weak positive significant relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation.

The hypothesis of this study which states that there is a negative relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation is rejected. This does not agree with the findings of the studies by Din et al. (2014) and Zhang and Begley (2011) which implied that power distance has a negative relationship with organizational assimilation.

On the other hand, this study agrees with the studies of Wei et al. (2017) and Aquino et al. (2006) which assert that high power distance is positively correlated with organizational assimilation. This study suggests that employees assimilate better if high power distance is present in the organization.

Factors Affecting the Relationship of Organizational Assimilation and Power Distance

Previous studies show that age, sex at birth, educational attainment, previous experience in the industry, and length of stay are factors affecting the relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation (Del Villar, 2015; Acuna & Rodriguez, 1996; Zaman, 2015; Kassing, 1997; Hristova, 2016). Following this, the researcher attempted to determine whether the sociodemographic variables could be the factors affecting the relationship between organizational assimilation and power distance by conducting correlational tests.

Table 5

Correlation with sociodemographic variables

	Power Distance		Organizational Assimilation	
Age	G = -0.107	p = 0.398	G = 0.034	p = 0.762
Sex at Birth	**χ2 = 0.843**	p = 0.359	**χ2 = 1.125**	p = 0.570
Educational Attainment	G = 0.052	p = 0.795	G = 0.151	p = 0.373
Previous ESL Experience	**χ2 = 0.760**	p = 0.383	**χ2 = 1.595**	p = 0.450
Length of Stay	G = -0.148	p = 0.293	G = 0.044	p = 0.711

The tests were done to see if there are significant relationships between the sociodemographic variables and power distance and organizational assimilation. However, results from these tests revealed that there are no significant relationships between the aforementioned variables. This means that there is no significant relationship between age and power distance, age and organizational assimilation, sex at birth and power distance, sex at birth and organizational assimilation, etc.

On the contrary, further examination of the qualitative data gathered from personal interviews yielded interesting insights from the interviewees showing that there can be factors affecting their power distance and organizational assimilation. Hence, a thematic analysis of their responses was implemented which led to the prevailing themes namely personality, relationship, age, and family and affiliation.

Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Relationship between Power Distance and Organizational Assimilation

The results of the thematic analysis of the interviewees' responses showed that the following are factors affecting the relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation.

Personality. Dealing with different kinds of personality also makes a person adjust their assimilation to what is current. Supervisors need to adjust their personalities to create a good atmosphere at work (Sandor, 2014). On the other hand, the character or the personality of both the employees and the supervisor is a big factor in the overall assimilation process (Ramirez, 2018).

Teacher E mentioned that she prefers a leader who has a strong personality. She looks up to him. She can easily assimilate with someone who looks so

conceited and considers her boss as a superhero. She believes that a leader should always be that superhero which sets the leader apart from the employees. Consequently, employees obey leaders who look powerful and commanding.

> Wordy *'yung bago naming* Filipino boss *dito sa Pilipinas. Madali kasi akong makumbinsi ng mga mayayabang na tao. Napapatulala ako. Kaya minsan, kapag may naririnig akong ayaw nila sa* style *niya, tinatanong ko sarili ko kung may mali ba sa akin. Kapag siya kasi nagsasalita, 'yung pagiging mayabang at maangas niya magsalita, para sa akin, isa siyang parang* superhero.

> [My Filipino boss here in the Philippines uses a lot of words when he speaks. I can easily be convinced by a person who has a strong personality. I am stunned by him. Every time I hear people who do not like him, I ask myself if there is something wrong with me. Every time he speaks, his boastful way of speaking, for me, he is like a superhero.]

According to Deo (2020), there is already an expectation for leaders to possess 'superpowers' to run an organization successfully. Wei et al. (2017) and Aquino et al. (2006) assert that in a high-power distance society, the degree of being dependent on followers or subordinates to their leaders or superiors is high. This means they prefer a likable leader to maintain access to important resources. Acceptance of inequalities is already present in powerful and less powerful people. Del Villar (2013) also argues that the high-power cultural orientation of Filipinos and superiors' number one choice of compliance-gaining strategy based on power have a relationship.

Teacher E also experienced having two team leaders with different power distance cultural dimensions. Her first leader had a low power distance, and the current one has a high power distance.

> Regarding *sa* power distance, *depende rin sa* personality *ng* leader. *Dalawa na ang naging* team leader *na na-*experience *ko diyan. 'Yung una,* leader *talaga siya talaga sa loob ng* office. *Paglabas mo,* friend *mo na siya talaga. 'Yung* team leader *ko naman ngayon, mas ini-*impose *niya na* leader *siya, na para niyang sinasabi sa mga kilos niya na* 'Leader *mo ako* and you should know that'. *'Yung una, natural na lang pinapakita na* leader *siya at natural din 'yung pagtrato mo sa kanya bilang isang* leader: how she acts *sa* work, *kung gaano siya ka-metikuloso sa mga ginagawa namin, doon na nade-*develop *'yung* respect *mo sa kanya. May* skills *din naman 'yung* leader *namin ngayon. Mas pinaparamdam niya 'yung agwat namin.*

[Regarding power distance, it depends on the leader's personality. I had two team leaders. The first team leader acted like a leader inside the office. But after work, we treated each other as friends. On the other hand, my current leader imposes that she is my leader. Her actions tell us that 'I am your leader and you should know that'. The first leader exemplified the traits of a natural leader wherein you would give your respect. The other one makes us feel the gap, and lets us know that we are far from each other.]

In this kind of situation, Teacher E adjusts her treatment to the current cultural dimension. She was used to dealing with someone from a low power distance. Now, she needs to deal with her current leader's personality with a high-power distance.

Relationship. Relationship with the managers and the colleagues is important in assimilation. Immediate supervisors are responsible for maintaining the employees' commitment (Robinson, 2003). This was evident through Teacher D's experience. Teacher D's current team leader was her co-teacher from another ESL company. Although there are still some factors in her assimilation like beliefs and principles, it was easy for her to assimilate since she already knew her.

> *Magkasama kasi kami noon sa dating* company. I try to maintain a professional relationship. *Ayokong lumalapit sa kanya kasi baka sabihin umaabuso ako dahil magkakilala na kami dati pa. At ako naman, ayoko naman na ma-*burden *siya baka na-pe-*pressure *siya na pagbigyan niya ako* which *hindi naman nangyayari kasi talagang pinaparamdam niya sa akin na* supervisor *ko siya. Pero* overall, *madali lang ako naka-*adjust *kasi kilala ko na siya.*

> [My current supervisor and I were colleagues at another ESL company. I still try to maintain a working relationship because I do not want some issues and I also do not want her to be pressured to always accommodate me because she knows me well. It seldom happens because she would make me feel as well that she is my supervisor. But overall, it was not hard to adjust because I already know her.]

Assimilation is easier if there is already an established relationship. The supervisor's effort to be approachable to their employees is a big help in assimilation (Sandor, 2014).

Age. While age using quantitative data did not show any significant relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation, age emerged as one of the factors based on qualitative data. Those who are older are more acculturated than the younger ones because older employees are associated with maturity reassertion and improvement of qualities (Hristova, 2016).

Teacher A believes that age affects how you can adapt to different ways of communicating.

> Almost *mag-30 na ako. Mas* versatile *ako sa pakikipag-usap. Kaya kong sabayan 'yung mas bata sa akin. Kaya ko rin sabayan 'yung mas matanda sa akin. Siguro tingin ko*, factor *din 'yun.*

> [I am almost 30 years old. With my age, I am versatile in communicating with people older than I am or younger than I am.]

In connection to power distance and assimilation, he also added that in a setting where there is a younger leader and an older subordinate, even the leader adjusts to the older subordinate.

> *Kahit may* position *'yung isa, pero mas matanda 'yung* member *niya, nandoon 'yung* respect *niya tulad ng pag-po o opo. Minsan medyo nangingiming magbigay ng* coaching *ang* leader *kasi nga matanda.*

> [There is still respect towards an older subordinate from a leader who is younger than him or her. They usually use '*po*' and '*opo*' in communicating as a sign of respect to the elders. Sometimes, there are hesitations on the team leader's part in giving coaching to someone older than him or her.]

This is where he noticed that power distance is not just about rank or position in society but also with older people.

Family and Affiliation. Filipinos belong to a family-oriented culture that makes family one of the factors in assimilation in connection to power distance. Bosses are considered parent figures. They are described as having a lot of experience in the field which consequently includes knowledge that they generously share with their employees, resulting in compliance and obeying the supervisors (Cancino, 2014). On the other hand, one known compliance strategy in the company is the family culture knowing that family is given much value. Compliance is usually assured when anything about being a family is observed (Del Villar, 2013).

One of the teachers mentioned that her view of power distance is being carried over from their household to her workplace. She had a strict mother, and she was able to adapt to a strict boss at work because she was already used to this kind of setup. She also respects the strict boss like what she used to do with her mother.

> *Kapag umuwi naman ang* mother *ko, which [happened]* every after two years, *mga more than* 10 years *siyang naging* OFW (Overseas Filipino Worker) *eh. Nag-stay lang siya sa bahay ng* two weeks to one month the most. *Susundin ko kasi siya kasi* strict siya. *Kaya siguro na-*adapt *ko rin siya sa* office. *Mas madali sa akin makasunod kung may distansya ako sa* leader *ko.*"

> [Every time my mother would go home which happened every after two years, since she was an OFW (Overseas Filipino Worker) for more than 10 years, she would just stay at home for two weeks to a month. I would follow her because she is strict. I think that is the reason why I was able to carry that over to the office. It is also easier for me to follow if there is a distance between my leader and me.]

Another teacher views power distance as reflected in his religious community which is also reflected in his workplace.

> *Kahit sa* religious community *namin, iba 'yung* respect *mo kapag may* position *or may* responsibility *'yung tao.* So, I think, *sa* Filipinos, every aspect *ng* culture *natin,* whether social, religious or *kahit sa* secular, *or sa* work, *naha-*highlight *talaga sa atin 'yung* position. *Kahit 'yung sa* background *ko,* even before joining the company, *may ganoon na akong* disposition.

> [In our religious community, there is a kind of respect being given to people who are in position or were given special responsibility. I think, in the Filipino culture, whether social, religious, secular, or even at work, position is always given importance. Even before joining the company, I already have that disposition.]

Influence of Power Distance on Organizational Assimilation of Filipino Employees Working in the Philippines

Through the personal interviews, qualitative data were analyzed to position this study in a wider context. The views and insights of the interviewees were

categorized using thematic analysis to identify the influence of power distance on the organizational assimilation of Filipino employees working in the Philippines.

Saturation and Disengagement. The saturation point is seen here as a negative impact based on the responses. According to Harrington and Voehl (2014), saturation point happens when a person or an organization stretches its limit to take in which can lead to poor effectiveness. This is where disengagement comes in. Disengagement is when an employee is at work but mentally logged off. They are passive; robotically going through the motions. Employees might not hate their job enough to leave, but neither do they like it enough to exert much effort (Adonis, 2014).

Disengagement is associated with being demotivated. It happens usually in a high-power distance culture where the management style is autocratic, and employees are not equal and close to their superiors. Power distance affects employees' empowerment and team participation (Din, et al, 2014). On the other hand, employees feel usually saturated when their expectations are not met, and unmet expectations cause dissatisfaction (Robinson, 2003). Employees will also not be explorative even after doing all the mentoring and coaching (Rodriguez & Hechanova, 2014).

Teacher A pointed out that it is hard to keep up with the changes. The feeling of being manipulated like a robot is a sign of being saturated because they cannot do anything about it and would just follow. Even if they do not want to follow, they just obey to avoid conflict. However, in the long run, it results in disengagement.

> *Ang mga Korean, mahilig mag-*experiment. *Madalas, ang tagal nila bago mag-*adjust. *Halimbawa ngayon, magpapa-*contest *sila sa opisina, magpapa-*incentive *sila. Ipipilit nila ang* goal *na ito. Sa* assimilation, *ang* effect *'nun ay napapagod ang empleyado.* Like *ako, nag-iisip naman ako na empleyado. At nakikita ko na 'yung mga* policy *na ini-*implement *nila ay hindi* effective, *pero kailangan kong gawin. Ang* effect *'nun sa* assimilation *ay nawawalan ka ng tiwala sa* leadership, *napapagod ka, nagiging* negative *ka sa* work.

> [Koreans love to experiment. Most of the time, they adjust too long. Today, they are launching a contest in the office, and they are going to give incentives. They are going to force this on the employees. For most of the employees, this is not going to be effective, but they need to do it. The effect of this in assimilation is their loss of trust in their leaders. They will also feel tired. That will also have a negative impact on their work.]

Teacher D uses disengagement as her way to cope with stress. She even used the term '*dedma*' in her statements which means 'she does not care anymore'.

> I find ways *na maka-*adapt *para hindi na ako masyadong ma-*stress *sa paligid* [I find ways to adapt for me not to get stressed out]. I don't take things seriously. *Dedma na lang* [I just ignore it]. So, my way of adjusting is if it takes a toll on my health, I try to learn the art of *dedma para mas madali maka-*adapt [so that I can easily adapt].

Dedma is a combination of the English term "dead malice" which means to ignore (Solano, 2017). One respondent also used the phrase "go with the flow" which means a person lets things happen without bothering to oppose it, which is a sign of being passive or disengaged. She also pointed out that Filipinos are generally scared to share their thoughts especially those in a much higher position than them. They think that doing so means disrespecting their superiors.

Compromise and Retaliation. Most misunderstandings due to conflicts are often solved through compromises. It is also used to establish a good relationship when finding a solution or agreement (Alton, 2017). It is also where role negotiation happens which involves compromising and bargaining of one's expectations to the organization (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). In this context, compromises are negatively taken because these are unhealthy compromises. If compromises undermine personal beliefs and values, these are unhealthy compromises (Ruths, 2018). In this context, unhealthy compromise is where employees negotiate their identities (Choe, 2015), but they give up their cultural dimension and become submissive to the much stronger dimensions of the organization. According to the interview, there are different reasons why there are unhealthy compromises. These are fear and maintaining a harmonious working relationship.

Meanwhile, one of the respondents mentioned that she compromises her cultural dimension to avoid conflicts and to have a harmonious working relationship. She also reiterated that Filipino employees do not assert their voices just to keep harmony in the workplace even though it compromises their own beliefs.

> *Siguro dahil sa* superiors *na pinagdaanan ko, iba't ibang* level, I try to juggle *sarili ko* (I have worked with different kinds of supervisors and that makes me adapt to different situations). *May mga* times *na sobrang* strict, *lalaban ako minsan* (There are times that supervisors are too strict. I sometimes resist and fight back). *Pero kapag iniisip ko ang pamilya ko kapag nawalan ako ng trabaho, baka personalin ako o hanapan ako ng butas, nakikipag-*compromise *ako*

(But every time I think of my family, I compromise because of
fear to lose my job. They might get back on me if that happens).

Retaliation happens if a compromise has not been reached and the superior
has lost the compromise. England (2018) defines retaliation as any adverse
action that any employer or superior takes against an employee because they
complained about harassment or discrimination. According to Kassing (1997),
some employees are afraid to dissent or to express their disagreement or
frustration because of the risk of retaliation.

Being Outspoken. Being outspoken is evident when people in an
organization are already confident to voice out their insights and to question
some things happening in the organization. A respondent mentioned that due to
the existing system, people do not care to question it. Hence, they are disengaged.
As time changes, however, people are now more critical and are not hesitant to
express themselves.

Goldman and Myers (2014) assert that employee dissent is correlated with
acculturation. This means an employee is already assimilated when they can
express their dissent with confidence. Moreover, Croucher et al. (2016) assert that
an employee can freely express themselves with their coworkers and supervisors
if they are already assimilated. This is also agreed upon by another respondent.

Just like any other Asians, Filipinos recognize and respect authority. It
promotes harmony. Nevertheless, times are changing. As we become more
globalized and westernized, we become aware of our rights and uniqueness,
Hence, from time to time, there are employees who start questioning and
wondering when they notice that something [does not] add up.

The respondent reiterated the importance of power distance to Filipinos
because other factors affect Filipinos' views. They are now active in being critical
if there is something wrong.

Summary and Conclusion

The study aimed to determine the relationship between power distance
cultural dimension and organizational assimilation of Filipino online ESL
teachers. A mix of quantitative and qualitative measures was administered to
achieve the objectives of this study.

A total of 162 respondents working as office-based online ESL teachers in
Metro Manila participated in the study. The respondents answered two research
instruments in one survey which were Del Villar's (2013) Power Distance Cultural
Orientation Questionnaire to determine the population's dominant power
distance dimension, and Gailliard et al.'s (2010) Multidimensional Organizational

Assimilation Index measure to determine their level of assimilation. Results show that the population had a high level of power distance with a mean score of 59.09 (SD=6.51) which agrees with the studies of Del Villar (2012), Del Villar (2015), and Acuna and Rodriguez (1995) that Filipinos belong to a high-power distance society. This means they put much importance on positions, ranks, and hierarchy in the environment they belong to. Meanwhile, this population also has a moderate level of assimilation with a mean score of 119.01 (SD=17.74).

Correlation tests were done to determine the relationship between power distance cultural dimension and organizational assimilation. Results show that there is a weak positive yet significant relationship between power distance cultural dimension and organizational assimilation with rho = 0.251 and a p-value = 0.002. Although the relationship between the variables is weak, this study still suggests the possibility of online Filipino ESL teachers assimilating in a high-power distance culture. This data does not agree with this study's hypothesis that there is a negative relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation.

The researcher also sought to determine if the sociodemographic variables affected the relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation by conducting correlational tests. Results showed that none of the sociodemographic variables affect the relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation.

Qualitative measures were also conducted through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis which showed that personality, relationship, age, and family and affiliation are the emerging factors affecting the relationship between power distance and organizational assimilation.
Using the same mode of analysis, saturation and disengagement, compromise and retaliation, and being outspoken are the influences of power distance on the organizatinal assimilation of Filipino employees working in the Philippines.

Implications of the Study

The ESL industry is one of the many industries where a lot of people are employed. Each individual has their cultural dimension. A certain organization also has an established culture. Many factors affect the level of assimilation of the employees and it depends on the cultural dimension connected to it.

Assimilation is viewed as something positive because it is always associated with being one with the organization. Meanwhile, this research states that it is not always the case. There are some instances in which assimilation is viewed negatively. This happens when an employee is forced or needs to embrace another's cultural dimension for them to assimilate. To foster assimilation

positively, all employees, whether from the management to the subordinates, should get to know their co-workers' power distance cultural dimension. In that way, a compromise can take place. Compromising should not be done in such a way that one is on the losing end. Moreover, the approach in assimilation should not be taken as a 'one size fits all' approach but it should be more than a personal approach. This is best done by the superiors when coaching and mentoring their subordinates.

Open communication is a must in any workplace. This is advisable for the improvement of every aspect of the organization. There will be no open communication if an employee is hesitant to voice out their opinions or if they are apprehensive about expressing their thoughts. If one is not apprehensive in communicating, they can convey their message well to the management. Thus, it can yield to the development of the company and the professional relationship among the workers.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This research was conducted during the pre-pandemic period. This makes the results limited to the experiences of the respondents before the pandemic started. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, more employees prefer to work from home. 'Work from home' trend is climbing due to the quarantine imposed in the Philippines (Abad, 2020). It is recommended to compare if the assimilation is different when someone is working from home compared to someone working in an office-based setting.

This study is also limited to one ESL company. There are many ESL companies, not just in Metro Manila, but all over the Philippines. In engaging other respondents in future research, the scope of this study can be broadened which can enrich the contribution of this research. It is also recommended that different industries in the Philippines should be explored using these variables.

The questionnaires used were originally written in English. It is also recommended to have a Filipino language version of the questionnaires to be used for other industries that are not well-versed in the said language.

Even though the results of this study revealed that there is a weak correlation between variables, there is still a possibility of a connection to high workplace assimilation, which is supported by previous studies' claim about the Filipino workplace culture. Filipinos are accustomed to hierarchical setups that value titles and ranking, which is consequently utilized as a high compliance gaining strategy. While this result does not coincide with what other researchers have found, it offers an intriguing viewpoint toward understanding Filipinos' organizational communication behaviors in particular, and their interpersonal

communication behaviors in general. This may also aid in explaining other aspects of Filipino culture, such as choosing political leaders and supporting social media influencers, among others.

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