UNVEILING GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES IN THE MODERATED MEDIATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE ON GREEN PURCHASE INTENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

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Abstract

This study investigates the sequential effects of Environmental Knowledge (ENKD) and Environmental Concern (ENCN) on Green Purchase Intention (GPIT), with a focus on generational differences in the context of green products. The study examines Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z through moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro Model 58. A multi-stage sampling method was used to collect data from 420 Thai consumers aged 18 to 59 years old, utilizing convenience sampling through the mall-intercept technique. The findings reveal that younger generations exhibit higher levels of ENKD, ENCN, and GPIT than older generations. Notably, ENCN demonstrates a significant sequential influence on GPIT, with Generation Z and Generation Y playing a critical role in the moderated mediation model. However, the study has some limitations, such as the use of convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, factors such as socioeconomic background, educational level, and cultural differences among generations could influence the relationships among environmental knowledge, environmental concern, and green purchase intention. Future studies could further investigate these factors to provide more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of green consumer behavior. This study contributes uniquely by exploring the sequential impact of ENCN on GPIT, addressing a gap in the literature on generational differences in green consumer behavior.

Keywords: Environmental Knowledge, Environmental Concern, Green Purchase Intention, Generation, Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory

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Introduction

The eco-friendly business sector has attracted significant attention from global investors due to growing awareness of climate change's effects on human quality of life and the global economy. This heightened concern has spurred international discussions aimed at finding solutions to these critical issues (The Nation, 2023). Consequently, governments worldwide have introduced policies emphasizing environmental sustainability. In Thailand, the government's green economy transition (Foreign Office of The Government Public Relations Department, 2024) focuses on two critical success factors: effective environmental policies and robust institutional frameworks. Cooperation among key stakeholders—government, private sector, and the public—is crucial to achieving this goal (Suzuki et al., 2024).

Moreover, consumer values concerning environmental sustainability have shifted significantly. Today's consumers are increasingly environmentally conscious, which has contributed to the widespread popularity of the green trend. Notably, younger generations show a greater willingness to pay premium prices for eco-friendly products (KResearch, 2021). This evolving consumer mindset presents a valuable business opportunity for innovators developing sustainable solutions (Yuan et al., 2022), which not only enhance competitive advantage but also promote global environmental sustainability (De Silva et al., 2021).

In addition to creating innovative green solutions, effective marketing is essential for business growth. Environmental knowledge is critical in shaping successful marketing strategies because it helps businesses understand the causes of environmental crises and engages consumers in reducing their environmental impact, which stems largely from human activities (Ongsakul et al., 2024). Marketers, therefore, must educate consumers about environmental knowledge while simultaneously persuading them to support eco-friendly products and services.

Environmental issues often generate heightened environmental concern among consumers, which may arise from various factors, including personal or familial health problems caused by poor environmental conditions. For example, air pollution, such as PM 2.5 (Rajagopalan et al., 2020), significantly affects many age groups in Thailand. Changes in seasonal patterns also impact Thai agriculture, where farmers continue to rely on predictable environmental conditions to meet production targets. Additionally, various other environmental circumstances trigger public concern, which in turn influences consumer behavior (Wang & Scrimgeour, 2023).

One key form of consumer response is purchase intention, which occurs when consumers assess the significance of a product or service and commit to purchasing it (Hong et al., 2023). In the context of eco-friendly products, purchase intention plays a pivotal role in generating demand for environmentally

sustainable goods (Zhuang et al., 2021), thereby fostering the growth of green businesses. However, consumer responses are not uniform and vary across individuals, with generational differences serving as a key influencing factor. These variations stem from differing environmental experiences during formative years, alongside technological advancements, both of which shape distinct consumer behaviors (Ghouse et al., 2024).

This study focuses on three generational cohorts active in the workforce—Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X—representing key consumer segments. It seeks to address the gap in understanding how generational differences shape the influence of environmental knowledge as a marketing stimulus, within the framework of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, in the context of green marketing in Thailand. The research aims to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: How do Environmental Knowledge (ENKD), Environmental Concern (ENCN), and Green Purchase Intention (GPIT) influence one another among consumers in Thailand?

Research Question 2: Can the S-O-R theory effectively explain the green purchase intentions of Thai consumers?

Research Question 3: How do generational differences influence the sequential effects of Environmental Knowledge (ENKD) and Environmental Concern (ENCN) on Green Purchase Intention (GPIT) among Thai consumers?

Objectives

1. To examine the sequential effect of ENKD and ENCN on GPIT.

2. To investigate the moderated mediation of generation in the sequential effect of ENKD and ENCN on GPIT.

Literature Review

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory explains how individuals respond differently to external stimuli based on their internal processes, often referred to as the "black box" of the buyer. This theory, as developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) identifies three key processes: stimulus, organism, and response.

The S-O-R framework is particularly relevant to the present study, which examines marketing in the context of environmentally friendly products. In this model, ENKD serves as the stimulus, while ENCN acts as the organism, representing individual variations in concern levels. Finally, the response process culminates in GPIT.

Differences Generational

Generational differences among consumers significantly influence various aspects, particularly how behavior is expressed, often showcasing distinct characteristics. Previous research frequently focuses on comparing Gen Y and Gen Z, highlighting that Gen Y tends to make more rational and logical decisions when purchasing products (Ghouse et al., 2022). In contrast, Gen Z places greater emphasis on knowledge,

enjoyment, and promotional discounts when making buying decisions (Agrawal, 2022).

In the context of green products, environmental knowledge plays a critical role in shaping Gen Z's openness to adopting eco-friendly products more readily than other generations (Harmon et al., 2022). These green products can range from food and clothing to fashion items (Nuh et al., 2023). Regardless of the product type, Gen Z remains the most highly engaged cohort regarding sustainability. On the other hand, Gen X often exhibits more conservative behavior, leaning toward practicality and traditional purchasing patterns. While they are gradually becoming more conscious of environmental issues, their adoption of green products tends to be slower than Gen Y and Gen Z, largely due to the generational gap in exposure to sustainability trends and innovations (Aiswarya et al., 2024).

The Sequential Effect of ENKD, ENCN, and GPIT

Consumer environmental knowledge refers to an individual's awareness of the causes of environmental issues and their understanding of how to mitigate or resolve ecological problems through environmentally responsible actions (Laheri et al., 2024).

On the other hand, environmental concern encompasses an individual's awareness of environmental issues (Mishra & Kaur, 2023) and their perception of these problems as a significant threat to the quality of life for all living beings (Nguyen et al., 2024). This concern often leads to a willingness to engage in environmental conservation efforts and to encourage others to participate in environmentally friendly activities (Chuah et al., 2020). Green purchase intention represents an individual's intention to contribute positively to the environment by fostering the demand for eco-friendly products (Zhuang et al., 2021). It has been defined as a deliberate and stepwise process that culminates in a strong commitment to purchasing environmentally friendly products (Nur Jamal et al., 2021), ultimately aiming to maximize ecological benefits (Lin et al., 2023) and reinforcing the intention to engage in green purchases (Shang et al., 2024).

Previous studies have demonstrated the sequential effect of Environmental Knowledge (ENKD), Environmental Concern (ENCN), and Green Purchase Intention (GPIT), highlighting the influence of both ENKD and ENCN on GPIT. Additionally, ENKD has been shown to impact ENCN directly. A literature review further suggests that these variables can contribute to sustainable consumption. Based on these findings, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: ENKD has a significant influence on GPIT.

Hypothesis 2: ENKD has a significant influence on ENCN.

Hypothesis 3: ENCN has a significant influence on GPIT.

Moderated Mediation Role of Generation

Based on Ghouse et al. (2024), consumers from Generation Y and Generation Z in

India exhibit differing levels of environmental knowledge, influencing their green purchase intentions in distinct ways. Notably, environmental knowledge plays a more pivotal role in driving green purchase intentions among Generation Z compared to Generation Y. This highlights the importance of generational differences in green marketing research.

This finding aligns with Eti (2024), which emphasizes the significance of generational differences in moderating the relationships between key green marketing variables, specifically examining the moderation effect of generation on the relationship between environmental concern and green purchase intention.

Similarly, Ata et al. (2021) further investigate the moderation effect of generation within the context of green marketing variables. These studies collectively underscore the critical role that generational differences play in shaping green consumer behavior, offering valuable insights for developing targeted green marketing strategies. Accordingly, the following research hypothesis can be proposed:

Hypothesis 4a: Generation moderates the relationship between ENKD and ENCN, such that the relationship is stronger for certain generations.

Hypothesis 4b: Generation moderates the relationship between ENCN and GPIT, such that the relationship is stronger for certain generations.

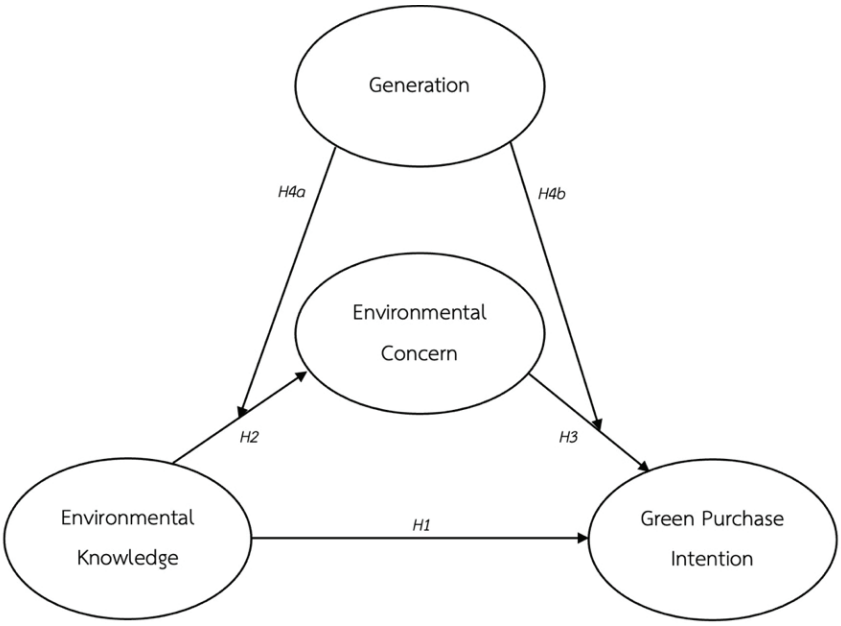

Figure 1 Research Framework

Source: Authors' own creation

Methodology

Data Collection

A questionnaire was administered using a nonprobability sampling method to collect data from Thai consumers aged 18 to 59 years old. A total of 420 participants, representing Generations X, Y, and Z, were surveyed between August 25 and September 20, 2024. This sample size is considered appropriate given the study's inclusion of 21 observable variables, aligning with the guidelines for structural equation modeling analysis (Hair et al., 2012). For this study, Generation Z refers to those born between 1997 and 2005, Generation Y includes individuals born between 1981 and 1996, and Generation X consists of those born between 1965 and 1980.

A multi-stage sampling method was employed. Initially, Thailand's 77 provinces were divided into six regions: Northern (9 provinces), Northeastern (20 provinces), Central (22 provinces), Eastern (7 provinces), Western (5 provinces), and Southern (14 provinces).

In the second stage, quota sampling was applied at the provincial level to ensure regional representation. The sample size for each region was calculated by determining the ratio of the sample size to the total number of provinces (420 / 77 = 5.455) and multiplying it by the number of provinces in each region. This resulted in the following distribution: 49 respondents from the Northern region, 109 from the Northeastern region, 120 from the Central region, 38 from the Eastern region, 28 from the Western region, and 76 from the Southern region.

In the final stage, two provinces from each region were selected using convenience sampling, resulting in a total of 12 provinces: Chiang Mai, Nan, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Chonburi, Rayong, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Phang Nga, and Phatthalung. Data collection was conducted using the intercept method in public parks and activity spaces where large groups of individuals typically gather. These locations were selected due to their potential to attract individuals who engage with natural surroundings for recreational or other outdoor activities, which is hypothesized to be linked to increased environmental awareness. Trained enumerators administered the questionnaires through accidental sampling until a sample size of 420 respondents was achieved for subsequent analysis.

Measures

In this study, three latent variables were examined: Environmental Knowledge (ENKD), Environmental Concern (ENCN), and Green Purchase Intention (GPIT). ENKD was measured using a seven-item scale adapted and validated by Laheri et al. (2024), Sapsanguanboon and Faijaidee (2024), and Kim and Lee (2023), demonstrating a Cronbach's alpha of 0.862. ENCN was assessed with a seven-item scale adapted from Laheri et al. (2024), Hong et al. (2023), Rashid and Lone (2023), and Wang and Scrimgeour (2023), yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.879. GPIT was measured using a seven-item scale developed by Duong

(2023), Kumar and Basu (2023), and Lavuri et al. (2023), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.905. All measurements employed a five-point Likert scale.

Model

Using Model 58 of the PROCESS Macro, this study examined the conditional indirect effects of ENKD on GPIT through the mediator ENCN, with generation as a moderating variable. This approach is based on the moderated mediation model developed by Preacher et al. (2007) and further refined by Hayes (2017).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study sample (n = 420). The majority of the respondents were female (69.5%), followed by Generation Y (49.0%). Most participants had experience with green products (90.7%) and held at least a Bachelor's degree (79.0%). The monthly income distribution showed a wide range, with a significant proportion of respondents earning between 30,001 and 39,999 Thai baht (39.3%).

Moderated Mediation Effect Using Environmental Concern as the Mediator

The reliability of the data was assessed using Harman's single factor test. The results indicated that a single factor accounted for only 34.64% of the total variance, falling below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. This suggests that common method bias was unlikely to have significantly affected the results.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Consumers

Variables	List	F	(n = 420) %	CF
Gender	Male	114	27.1	27.1
	Female	292	69.5	100.0
Generation	X	111	26.4	26.4
	Y	206	49.0	75.4
	Z	103	24.5	100.0
Experience with green products	Yes	381	90.7	90.7
	No	39	9.3	100.0
Education	Below bachelor's degree	68	16.2	16.2
	Bachelor's degree	332	79.0	95.2
	Above bachelor's degree	20	4.8	100.0

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Consumers (Cont.)

Variables	List	F	(n = 420) %	CF
Monthly income (in Thai baht)	Below 10,000 baht	32	7.9	7.9
	10,001-19,999 baht	112	26.7	34.6
	20,001-39,999 baht	60	14.3	48.9
	30,001-39,999 baht	165	39.3	88.2
	40,000 baht and above	50	11.9	100.0

Notes: n = 420, 1 USD = 33.96 THB (exchange rate on August 25, 2024)
Source: The author's elaborations based on the researched data

Table 2 Correlations Matrix (n = 420)

Variable	GEN	ENKD	ENCN	GPIT
GEN	-			
ENKD	-.018	-		
ENCN	-.033	.659**	-	
GPIT	-.141**	.315**	.296**	-

Note: $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$
Source: The author's elaborations based on the researched data

An examination of the correlation matrix shows that the correlation coefficients among the independent variables are all below 0.8, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a significant issue in this analysis (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the moderated mediation analysis revealed a full mediation effect of Environmental Concern (ENCN) on the relationship between Environmental Knowledge (ENKD) and Green Purchase Intention (GPIT) across all generations, except for Generation X. Significant indirect effects were found for Generation Y (CI = [0.1795, 0.3193]) and Generation Z (CI = [0.6128, 0.8611]), but no significant indirect effect was observed for Generation X (CI = [-0.0490, 0.0333]).

Pairwise comparisons indicated significant differences in the indirect effects across generations, suggesting that the mediating role of ENCN varies across generational cohorts. Furthermore, the direct effect of ENKD on GPIT was non-significant (b = -0.0080, $p > .05$), supporting a full mediation model and rejecting H1. In conclusion, although the indirect effect of ENKD on GPIT through ENCN was significant for Generation Y and Z, the

moderating effect of generation (H4a and H4b) on this relationship was not supported, as no significant moderating effect was observed for Generation X. Thus, H2 and H3 were supported.

Discussion

In this study, the majority of respondents were female, belonging to Generation Y, with an educational level equivalent to a bachelor's degree and an income ranging from 30,001 to 39,999 baht. Most respondents reported prior experience purchasing green products. In this section, we will address the research questions as follows:

Research Question 1: How do Environmental Knowledge (ENKD), Environmental Concern (ENCN), and Green Purchase Intention (GPIT) influence one another among consumers in Thailand?

Table 3 Moderated Mediation Effect Using Environmental Concern as Mediator (n = 420)

Variables	Environmental Concern (Mediator) *B* (SE)	Green Purchase Intention (DV) *B* (SE)
Generation as moderator		
Environmental Knowledge	1.5997 (0.0881)***	-0.0080 (0.0851)
Generation	1.7401 (0.1603)***	1.8370 (0.3062)***
Environmental Concern		1.4082 (0.1962)***
Environmental Knowledge × Generation	-0.4515 (0.0401)***	
Environmental Concern × Generation		-0.5166 (0.0773)***
Conditional indirect effect for		
Generation X		-0.0014 (0.0204)
[LLCI, ULCI]		[-0.0490, 0.0333]
Generation Y		0.2513 (0.0354)
[LLCI, ULCI]		[0.1795, 0.3193]
Generation Z		0.7421 (0.0635)
[LLCI, ULCI]		[0.6128, 0.8611]
Direct Effect		-0.0080 (0.0851)

Table 3 Moderated Mediation Effect Using Environmental Concern as Mediator (n = 420) (Cont.)

Variables	Environmental Concern (Mediator) *B* (SE)	Green Purchase Intention (DV) *B* (SE)
Pairwise contracts between conditional indirect effects		
Between Generations X and Y		-0.2527 (0.0216)
[LLCI, ULCI]		[-0.2945, -0.2106]
Between Generations X and Z		-0.7435 (0.0531)
[LLCI, ULCI]		[-0.8477, -0.6364]
Between Generations Y and Z		-0.4908 (0.0377)
[LLCI, ULCI]		[-0.5634, -0.4143]
R^2	0.5669***	0.2149***

Notes: $^{***}p < .01$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{*}p < .10$; LLCI; lower limit confidence interval; ULCI: upper limit confidence interval. Bootstrap resamples = 10,000

Source: The author's elaborations based on the researched data

The results of this study reveal a sequential effect within the proposed model. Data analysis indicates that ENKD directly affects ENCN but does not directly influence GPIT. Conversely, ENCN directly affects GPIT, establishing a path of influence as follows: ENKD → ENCN → GPIT. Consequently, ENCN serves as a full mediator in this model.

Research Question 2: Can the S-O-R theory effectively explain the green purchase intentions of Thai consumers?

The findings substantiate the S-O-R theory, with ENKD acting as a stimulus that influences GPIT, mediated by ENCN. Thus, ENKD impacts GPIT indirectly through ENCN. The Stimulus-Organism-Response framework effectively explains these processes (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Additionally, ENKD accounts for 56.69% (R^2 = 0.5669) of the variance in ENCN, while the model predicts GPIT with an explanatory power of 21.49% (R^2 = 0.2149). Therefore, promoting environmental knowledge among consumers enhances their environmental concerns, subsequently motivating their green purchase intentions (Saari et al., 2021).

These findings enhance understanding of the relationships among environmental knowledge, concern, and purchase intentions within sustainable consumer behavior, providing valuable insights for practitioners aiming to promote eco-friendly purchasing practices.

Research Question 3: How do generational differences influence the sequential effects

of Environmental Knowledge (ENKD) and Environmental Concern (ENCN) on Green Purchase Intention (GPIT) among Thai consumers?

Generational differences play a crucial role in shaping levels of GPIT among consumers. The study focuses on Generations Z, Y, and X, revealing statistically significant moderated mediation effects for Generations Z and Y in the sequential relationship between ENKD and ENCN on GPIT. In contrast, no significant influence was observed in Generation X. Notably, Generation Z exhibited the highest conditional effects, suggesting that they may be aptly described as the "Green Generation".

This designation aligns with previous studies discussing generational differences in environmental behavior across various countries (Eti, 2024; Ghouse et al., 2024; Irfany et al., 2023; Rūtelionė & Bhutto, 2024), including those examining Thai consumers. This inclination toward environmental concern and sustainable purchasing may stem from contextual factors warranting further exploration.

The study reveals varying relationships between Environmental Knowledge (ENKD), Environmental Concern (ENCN), and Green Purchase Intention (GPIT) across different generational groups. This suggests that generational differences may be influenced by demographic factors such as gender, income, and education, which were not considered in this study. These unexamined factors could significantly affect environmental awareness and green purchase behavior. The findings align with Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (Bloom et al., 1956), which posits that individuals with greater environmental knowledge are more likely to develop higher environmental concern, influencing their purchasing intentions. Specifically, Generation Y and Z demonstrated stronger indirect effects of ENKD on GPIT through ENCN, possibly indicating more effective progression through Bloom's learning stages. In contrast, Generation X showed less significant effects, possibly due to lower environmental awareness or differing socio-economic factors.

Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore the importance of environmental knowledge and concern in shaping green purchase intentions, particularly among younger generations. Generations Z and Y show a stronger engagement with environmentally friendly behavior, while Generation X exhibits a more conservative response. This suggests a generational shift in attitudes toward sustainability, driven by increased environmental awareness and concern.

The study highlights that enhancing environmental knowledge can indirectly drive consumer behavior by elevating concern for the environment. Thus, fostering environmental education campaigns and integrating sustainability into marketing strategies are key to motivating green purchase intention, particularly in demographics more attuned to these issues.

The generational differences identified

here call for a tailored approach to green marketing, where strategies can be adapted to resonate with each group's unique preferences and concerns. While younger generations are more responsive to environmental messaging, further research is needed to better understand how older consumers can be encouraged to adopt greener practices.

Recommendations

Theoretical Development Suggestion

This study contributes to the existing literature on green marketing by highlighting the significant roles of environmental knowledge and environmental concern in shaping consumers' green purchase intentions and behaviors. Future research should delve deeper into these constructs by exploring their interactions with additional variables such as emotional responses and perceived behavioral control. Furthermore, conducting longitudinal studies may offer valuable insights into the progression of these relationships over time, especially as consumer attitudes shift and global environmental challenges continue to emerge.

Practical Application Suggestion

Marketers and policymakers should prioritize disseminating environmental knowledge through targeted educational campaigns to raise consumer awareness. Such initiatives could enhance environmental concerns and subsequently increase green purchase intentions.

Collaborations with educational institutions and non-governmental organizations can amplify these efforts, ensuring a broader reach and greater impact. Furthermore, businesses should develop and promote products that are not only environmentally friendly but also resonate with consumers' values and preferences, thereby encouraging sustainable purchasing behavior.

Future Research Direction Suggestion

Future research should expand on the generational differences observed in this study, investigating how various demographic factors, such as income and education level, influence green purchase behaviors. Additionally, researchers should consider employing qualitative methodologies to capture the nuanced perspectives of consumers regarding environmental issues. Exploring the impact of cultural differences on green marketing effectiveness can also yield valuable insights, especially in diverse markets.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis of factors such as environmental knowledge, awareness, and green purchase behavior with countries known for their strong environmental consciousness, such as Sweden, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, would provide valuable context. Examining policy measures such as subsidies, tax incentives, and environmental education in these countries could highlight their effectiveness in fostering sustainable consumption.

This would not only broaden our understanding of green purchase behavior in Thailand but also inform future strategies for promoting green businesses and policies

tailored to the local demographic and economic conditions. Lastly, examining the long-term effects of environmental marketing strategies on consumer loyalty and brand perception would benefits academics and practitioners.

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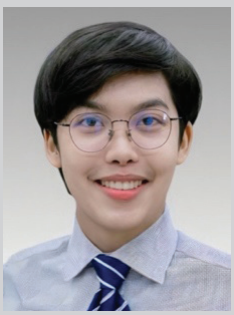

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