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**EMPLOYING ASEAN WAY IN DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN NON-ASEAN
WORKPLACES: PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVE OF AN ASEAN EDUCATOR IN JAPAN**

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15 June 2025

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Acceptance Page

This thesis titled: “**EMPLOYING ASEAN WAY IN DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN NON-ASEAN WORKPLACES: PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVE OF AN ASEAN EDUCATOR IN JAPAN**” is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Management and Development Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree **Master of ASEAN Studies**.

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Biographical Sketch

Jessaree Joaquin Ramos is a Learning and Development Adviser for a multinational company, with a focus on soft skills training, employee development, and cross-cultural communication. Born and raised in the province of Nueva Ecija, she has always been driven by the dream of bringing pride to her hometown while representing her cultural roots internationally. Her early education at St. John's Academy in San Jose City fostered a deep love for history and leadership. She pursued a degree in Social Sciences at Central Luzon State University, where she actively participated in various youth and international programs. Among her notable experiences are being chosen as a Young Ambassador and representing the Philippines in the China-Philippines Youth Exchange Program—both of which sparked her lifelong commitment to global engagement.

Jessaree began her professional journey as a global correspondent for a nonprofit organization in Hong Kong, which opened opportunities in training, facilitation, and research. She has since worked with diverse teams across APAC and EMEA regions, focusing on employee learning strategies that integrate cultural sensitivity and leadership growth.

Currently based in Japan, where she has resided for the past four years, Jessaree is pursuing her Master's degree at the University of the Philippines Open University. Her research explores soft skills development using ASEAN cultural frameworks to create inclusive learning environments in multicultural workplaces.

Her journey continues to be guided by the values of representation, resilience, and responsibility to her community and region.

Acknowledgement

This research journey has been shaped by the support, encouragement, and insights of many people, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude.

To my adviser, Prof. Jean, thank you for your consistent guidance, honest feedback, and patient mentorship throughout this process. Your support helped me refine my ideas and stay grounded in my purpose.

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To my alma mater, Central Luzon State University, and to my teachers at St. John's Academy of San Jose City, thank you for planting the seeds of curiosity and leadership early on. My journey started with your belief in my potential.

To my colleagues and mentors in the field of learning and development—both in the Philippines and abroad—your shared experiences and encouragement shaped the real-world perspective I brought into this research.

To my family—thank you for being my quiet strength. Your support, even from afar, has been a constant source of motivation.

Finally, to the communities I represent and the young professionals I've worked with—this work is for you. May it reflect the values of growth, cultural respect, and continuous learning that we all aspire to. Thank you.

Dedication

To my family and friends—

For your unwavering support, quiet sacrifices, and endless encouragement, even across distances. Your love, laughter, and presence—whether near or far—have been the foundation of my strength.

To my classmates here at MAS—

Thank you for being such a strong source of support throughout this journey. Your encouragement, shared memes, funny videos, and random pictures brought light to even the most stressful days. You didn't just help me—you helped us get through this course, and for that, I'm truly grateful.

To my mentors and educators—

For planting the seeds of curiosity and belief in my potential. Your guidance has shaped not only this work but who I've become.

To every ASEAN professional navigating new cultural spaces—

May this research serve as a small tribute to your resilience, your values, and your power to lead with empathy and purpose.

To myself—

I am proud of you. Living alone in another country, navigating unfamiliar systems, balancing work, life, and study—it hasn't been easy. But you kept going. You

showed up, even on the hardest days. This thesis is a testament to your strength, resilience, and growth. Keep going.

Abstract

This study explored how the ASEAN Way serves as a culturally grounded method for developing soft skills in non-ASEAN workplaces. Using an autoethnographic approach, the research draws on the lived experience of an ASEAN educator working in a multicultural professional context. Through inductive thematic analysis of workplace documents, including emails, memos, newsletters, and training materials, the study identified three key perspectives: People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence. These perspectives reflected the influence of ASEAN cultural values in shaping relational leadership, communication, and decision-making. The study also outlined twelve sub-themes representing specific routines that operationalized these perspectives, demonstrating how soft skills were performed as cultural practices. The final synthesis revealed that perspectives and routines were mutually reinforcing what was culturally believed was practiced, and what was practiced deepened cultural understanding. The findings contributed to the growing discourse on soft skills by showing that such competencies were not universal but were informed by cultural worldviews and relational ethics. This research affirmed the potential of the ASEAN Way as a soft skill framework, offering new insights into how intercultural professionals can lead and collaborate with empathy, diplomacy, and cultural awareness.

Keywords: ASEAN Way; Autoethnography; Communication; Consensus-building; Cultural Values; Global Workforce; Intercultural; People-centered Leadership; Qualitative Research; Respectful Workplace Practices; Soft Skills

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
University Permission Page	ii
Acceptance Page	iii
Biographical Sketch	iv
Acknowledgment	vi
Dedication	viii
Abstract	ix
Table of Contents	x
References	74

CHAPTER I: RATIONALE

The ASEAN Way for Global Workplace Skills	1
Professional Reflexivity and Practice	2

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Understanding Soft Skills	4
Importance of Soft Skills in Global Workplaces	4
Relationship Between Soft Skills and Hard Skills	5
ASEAN Workplace and Cultural Influences	6
Soft Skills in ASEAN	7
The ASEAN Way and Its Impact on Workplaces	8
ASEAN's Contribution to the Global Workforce	9
The ASEAN Way and Soft Skills Development	10

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Autoethnography: Locating Knowledge Within Lived Experience	11
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Employing Asean Way in Developing Soft Skills in Non-Asean Workplaces: Practices and Perspective of an Asean Educator in Japan	x
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Research Questions	12
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Autoethnography as Methodological Tool	15
Access to Naturally Occurring Data	16
Document-Based Analysis	17
Theme Development and Mapping	19
CHAPTER V: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
Routines/Practices of an ASEAN Educator	33
Communicating Openness and Inclusivity	33
Encouraging Participation and Building Confidence	35
Fostering Motivation and Belonging	37
Appreciating Work and Well-being	39
Strengthening Peer Relationships	41
Leading with Mutual Accountability	42
Guiding Collaboration	44
Sharing Decision-Making	45
Exercising Conflict Sensitivity and Diplomacy	47
Exchanging Ideas Constructively and Respectfully	49
Clarifying and Coordinating	51
Honoring Cultural Awareness and Local Practices	52
Perspective of an ASEAN Educator	54
People-Centeredness	55
Consensus Orientation	58
Respectful Coexistence	61
The Relationship between Perspectives and Routines	63
CHAPTER VI: RESEARCH SUMMARY	
Summary	67
Conclusion	68
Recommendations	70

APPENDICES	78
LIST OF TABLE/S	
Table 4.1. Analytic Table	20
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 4.1. The Autoethnographic Framework Applied in the Study	14
Figure 4.2. Flow of Data Analysis and Thematic Coding	18
Figure 4.3: Theme Mapping	19

Chapter I

RATIONALE

The ASEAN Way for Global Workplace Skills

Soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, and leadership, are essential for fostering effective workplace dynamics and ensuring the smooth functioning of any organization. These skills are not only crucial for individual performance but also for creating cohesive, productive teams that navigate challenges in diverse environments. However, the way soft skills are valued, understood, and developed varies significantly across cultures. These educators find that the soft skills they emphasize, shaped by the values and practices of the ASEAN region, do not always align with the priorities of their new work environments, affecting the way their professional development strategies are received and applied.

The ASEAN Way, characterized by a deep commitment to collectivism, mutual respect, and harmonious relationships. In ASEAN countries, there is a strong emphasis on fostering interpersonal skills that support cooperation, group cohesion, and a respectful approach to both authority and peers. These practices reflected a collective mindset that prioritizes the well-being of the group over the individual, promoting an inclusive and supportive approach to problem-solving and decision-making. ASEAN educators, influenced by these cultural norms, bring unique perspectives and methodologies to the workplace, which enrich professional environments in non-ASEAN settings. Their ability to adapt and apply these approaches effectively helps bridge cultural divides, creating more inclusive and globally competent organizations.

Professional Reflexivity and Practice: An ASEAN Educator's Role in a Non-ASEAN Workplace

Reflecting on my position as a Training Adviser is critical, particularly given my immersion in an international environment where the development of soft skills is not just an ideal but a key component of professional success. As a Filipino and a member of the ASEAN region, my perspective on the importance of soft skills is inherently shaped by my cultural background, which emphasizes values such as cooperation, respect, and maintaining harmonious relationships in both personal and professional contexts. These values have guided my approach to training and development throughout my career. As an ASEAN educator, I recognize that the development of soft skills must be understood and fostered in alignment with the cultural nuances of the specific environment in which I work. This means that as I work in non-ASEAN environments, particularly in Japan, I must constantly evaluate how my approach to soft skills training aligns with or diverges from local expectations and professional norms.

Living and working in Japan has allowed me to observe the distinct differences between the soft skills that are emphasized in the ASEAN context and those that are prioritized in Japanese workplaces. Japan, while valuing communication and collaboration, often places a strong emphasis on hierarchy, individual accountability, and precision, which can differ from the collective, relationship-based approach found in ASEAN cultures. These differences reflect broader cultural values, such as Japan's focus on individual achievement and order, versus ASEAN's prioritization of group harmony and mutual respect. Understanding these variations in the value and application of soft skills has been essential in my role as an educator and trainer. By reflecting on my position within this intercultural context, I am better able to adapt my

strategies to meet the needs of both the local workforce and the broader global workplace.

This ongoing reflection is not merely an exercise in personal introspection; it is a critical part of my professional development as an ASEAN educator working in a cross-cultural environment. It allows me to continually assess how my background influences my approach to teaching and training, and how these methods were adapted to foster more effective communication, collaboration, and leadership in a diverse range of professional settings. As I reflect on the differences in soft skills expectations between ASEAN and non-ASEAN cultures, I am able to design more inclusive training programs that integrate the best practices from both worlds, thereby promoting mutual understanding and respect between employees from different cultural backgrounds.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Understanding Soft Skills

Soft skills, also referred to as interpersonal or people skills, are the non-technical abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. These skills include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, emotional intelligence, leadership, and conflict resolution. While hard skills, such as technical knowledge or job-specific expertise, are crucial for carrying out specific tasks, soft skills are necessary to navigate workplace dynamics and are particularly important in a multicultural and globalized business environment. Goleman (1998) highlighted emotional intelligence, a critical component of soft skills, as essential for successful interpersonal interactions, suggesting that emotional awareness enhances decision-making and conflict resolution (Goleman, 1998). Robbins and Judge (2017) emphasized that competencies like leadership, communication, and collaboration were integral to working effectively in teams and contributing to organizational success (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Furthermore, Spencer & Spencer (1993) underlined that soft skills, such as decision-making and interpersonal relationships, are increasingly valued by employers due to their role in fostering a harmonious and productive work environment.

Importance of Soft Skills in Global Workplaces

In today's increasingly interconnected and globalized world, soft skills are more critical than ever. As businesses expand across borders and teams become more

diverse, the ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds is essential. Soft skills help bridge cultural differences, enhance teamwork and improve overall organizational performance. Wright (2010) argued that effective communication is vital in global business interactions, as it enabled teams to share ideas, resolve conflicts, and develop innovative solutions (Wright, 2010). Lockwood (2006) further emphasized that individuals who possess strong soft skills, such as problem-solving and emotional intelligence, are better equipped to lead teams and foster productive work environments (Lockwood, 2006). Robles (2012) identified key soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and leadership, as crucial for success in the global marketplace (Robles, 2012). These competencies not only improved individual performance but also contributed to organizational success in a competitive global economy. Moreover, employees who excelled in soft skills tend to have better job satisfaction and career progression (Adler, 2002).

Relationship Between Soft Skills and Hard Skills

The relationship between soft skills and hard skills is one of complementarity. While hard skills are necessary for technical expertise and performing specific tasks, soft skills enable individuals to apply their technical knowledge in a way that benefits the team and the organization. Haider and Gohar (2015) argued that both hard and soft skills are necessary for career success, as individuals who combine technical proficiency with interpersonal abilities are more likely to succeed in their roles (Haider and Gohar, 2015). The balance between the two types of skills was increasingly important, especially as companies focused on creating a culture of collaboration, communication, and innovation. Robles (2012) emphasized that employers are

seeking candidates who not only possess strong technical capabilities but also demonstrate leadership, emotional intelligence, and the ability to work effectively in diverse teams (Robles, 2012). Kundu and Malhan (2017) highlighted that in today's workplace, it was the soft skills, such as adaptability, communication, and teamwork, that often distinguish high performers from their peers (Kundu and Malhan, 2017). Soft skills played a pivotal role in translating technical knowledge into real-world success, as they allow individuals to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and build effective working relationships.

ASEAN Workplace and Cultural Influences

The workplace culture in ASEAN countries was deeply influenced by the region's traditional cultural values, which emphasized collectivism, hierarchy, and respect for authority. These values shaped how people interact in professional settings and determined how decisions were made. In countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, the concept of hierarchy was essential in the workplace, where seniority and respect for elders played a significant role in organizational interactions. Hempel (2004) explained that in ASEAN countries, leadership tends to be more top-down, with decisions being made by senior management after consulting the group (Hempel, 2004). Tan (2015) pointed out that in ASEAN workplaces, the process of decision-making was typically more collaborative and consensus-driven compared to the more individualistic and top-down decision-making styles seen in Western cultures (Tan, 2015). Ng and Keong (2009) argued that the emphasis on maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict was a key characteristic of ASEAN workplaces, influencing how issues were addressed, and decisions were made. The cultural importance of maintaining group cohesion and respect for senior authority has both positive and

negative impacts on organizational practices. On one hand, it fostered strong team collaboration, while on the other, it sometimes hindered open communication and innovation.

Soft Skills in ASEAN

ASEAN countries have increasingly recognized the importance of soft skills in developing a competitive workforce that is capable of thriving in the global economy. With the rise of globalization, many ASEAN countries have incorporated soft skills training into educational curricula and professional development programs. These skills, such as communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, and teamwork, are considered essential for achieving success in both domestic and international markets.

Pang (2018) highlighted that soft skills training was integral to educational reforms in ASEAN, with a growing emphasis on developing these competencies among students. This is particularly true in countries like Singapore, which has placed a strong emphasis on lifelong learning and skills development (Teo and Ho, 2014).

Marshall (2011) discussed how ASEAN countries have made substantial progress in soft skills development, with programs designed to enhance the communication, collaboration, and leadership abilities of workers. Sing (2014) further pointed out that, as the region becomes more integrated into the global economy, soft skills training has gained recognition as a key factor in preparing workers for international markets, enhancing their ability to communicate and collaborate across cultures.

The ASEAN Way and Its Impact on Workplaces

The ASEAN Way, characterized by principles of mutual respect, consensus-building, and non-confrontation, extends beyond political diplomacy and influences

organizational culture in ASEAN countries. The ASEAN Way promoted an environment of inclusivity, collaboration, and respect for differing opinions. This approach has far-reaching implications for workplace dynamics, where the emphasis on building consensus and fostering group harmony is integral to decision-making processes. Acharya (2001) described the ASEAN Way as a diplomatic philosophy that prioritizes peaceful coexistence and cooperation, and this cultural framework also shapes the leadership and organizational structures in ASEAN countries. Guo and Kuo (2017) noted that the ASEAN Way has led to a collaborative work environment where leadership is often shared and decision-making is a group effort, encouraging employees to actively participate in discussions and express their opinions. Dela Cruz (2019) suggested that these practices foster a more harmonious and cooperative work environment, which ultimately contributes to organizational success. However, it was also important to note that the consensus-driven nature of the ASEAN Way sometimes slows down decision-making processes, as the need to consult with multiple stakeholders delays critical actions (Dela Cruz, 2019).

Cultural values such as respect for hierarchy, collectivism, and social harmony have laid the foundation for the development of soft skills in ASEAN workplaces. In collectivist societies like those in ASEAN, the focus was often on group welfare rather than individual achievement. This cultural orientation encourages workers to develop competencies such as teamwork, cooperation, and conflict resolution, which are essential for maintaining harmony in the workplace. Hofstede (2001) argued that in collectivist cultures, there is a strong emphasis on social relationships and group cohesion, which directly influences how individuals approach their work and interact with others. Meanwhile, the collectivist cultures, like those in ASEAN, foster soft skills such as collaboration and communication, as individuals were encouraged to work

together towards a common goal (Triandis, 1995). Wahid and Kamarulzaman (2016) noted that these cultural values shaped how soft skills were applied in the workplace, emphasizing the importance of maintaining social harmony and mutual respect in all professional interactions.

ASEAN's Contribution to the Global Workforce

As ASEAN continues to grow economically and integrate into the global market, its contribution to the global workforce has become increasingly significant. The region's dynamic labor force, with its diverse skill set and growing emphasis on soft skills, is becoming an important asset for global businesses. Jansen (2017) discussed how the integration of ASEAN into the global economy has led to increased opportunities for its workforce to contribute to international markets. Lai & Tan (2013) highlighted that ASEAN's efforts to improve education and workforce development have led to a more skilled and competitive labor force, making the region a key player in global trade and industry. Furthermore, Tan (2015) argued that the region's focus on developing soft skills is helping workers from ASEAN countries stand out in global job markets, as these competencies are essential for success in multicultural and multinational work environments. The region's investment in workforce development is not only helping to reduce skills gaps but also positioning ASEAN as a major contributor to the global economy (Tan, 2015).

The ASEAN Way and Soft Skills Development

The ASEAN Way, which placed importance on consensus, cooperation, and harmony, influences the development and application of soft skills in the workplace. As ASEAN countries increasingly recognized the significance of these skills in the global

economy, the ASEAN Way offered a framework for integrating these competencies into organizational practices. Sharma (2018) described how the ASEAN Way's emphasis on consensus and non-confrontation promotes the development of soft skills, particularly in communication, leadership, and teamwork. The values of respect for authority, social harmony, and cooperation form the foundation for soft skills such as collaboration, conflict resolution, and effective communication. By fostering a cooperative and respectful environment, the ASEAN Way provides a cultural context in which soft skills can thrive, contributing to the creation of more effective and harmonious workplaces in the region (Sharma, 2018).

Chapter III

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This study adopts an autoethnographic framework as its primary qualitative research methodology. Autoethnography bridges personal narrative with cultural and organizational analysis, offering a reflective and critical examination of the researcher's lived experiences in relation to broader social and professional contexts. Through this approach, the study analyzed how soft skills were understood, applied, and negotiated by ASEAN educators within non-ASEAN workplace settings.

Locating Knowledge Within Lived Experience

Autoethnography was a qualitative research methodology that situated the researcher's personal experience at the center of inquiry, using it as a primary source of data to explore and interpret broader cultural, social, or organizational phenomena. It was grounded in the belief that individual narratives were embedded within complex social contexts and offered valuable insights into collective human behavior and institutional dynamics (Adams et al., 2015).

Theoretically, a drawn autoethnography from constructivist and interpretivist paradigms posited that reality was socially constructed and that knowledge emerges through subjective experiences and meaning-making processes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Autoethnographic research placed a strong emphasis on reflexivity, positionality, and the researcher-as-instrument, acknowledging the researcher's dual role as both participant and analyst (Chang, 2008).

Additionally, autoethnography was influenced by symbolic interactionism, which explored how individuals interpret and give meaning to their experiences through

social interaction (Blumer, 1969), and by critical and postmodern theories, which challenged conventional power structures, dominant narratives, and notions of objective in research (Richardson, 2000). These perspectives supported autoethnography's aim to expose hidden cultural dynamics, voice marginalized perspectives, and produce transformative knowledge.

Furthermore, Adams et al. (2011) described autoethnography as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience to understand cultural experience” (p. 273). The process involved using the self as a site of data collection and analysis, while positioning personal narratives within broader sociocultural contexts to uncover patterns, contradictions, and meanings relevant to the research focus.

In practical terms, autoethnography was useful in disciplines such as education, healthcare, organizational studies, and intercultural communication, where the insider perspective provided nuanced understandings of lived realities. By blending storytelling with critical analysis, autoethnography offered a powerful means of generating knowledge that was emotionally resonant, contextually rich, and theoretically grounded.

Research Questions

This study explores the perspectives and experiences of ASEAN educators working in non-ASEAN workplaces, focusing on their views on the ASEAN Way as a soft skills method. It sought to understand how these educators perceive the ASEAN Way's effectiveness in fostering communication, collaboration, and adaptability in culturally diverse work environments. Additionally, this research examined the routines and strategies these educators employ to integrate the ASEAN Way into their

professional practices. By analyzing how they develop and apply culturally specific approaches to soft skills training, the study highlights key practices that contribute to more inclusive and adaptive workplaces.

By recognizing the contributions of ASEAN educators, this study aimed to showcase how a cultural framework for soft skills was incorporated into global workforce strategies. Ultimately, the research supports the development of approaches that enhance mutual understanding between ASEAN and non-ASEAN work cultures, fostering environments that promote diversity, cooperation, and continuous learning.

This study was guided by two core research questions:

1. What routines does an ASEAN educator employ when developing the ASEAN Way as a soft skill method in a non-ASEAN workplace?
2. What is the perspective of an ASEAN educator on the ASEAN Way as a soft skill method in a non-ASEAN workplace?

These questions enable a deep inquiry into how cultural values influence soft skill practices. The first question explores interpretive and reflective insights; the second addresses observable routines, strategies, and adjustments made to bridge cultural and professional gaps.

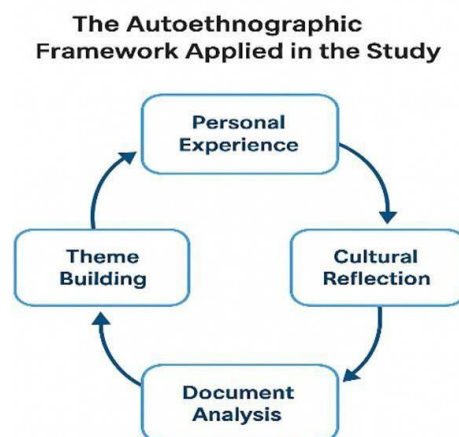
Chapter IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study is grounded in document-based analysis and reflexive writing, consistent with autoethnographic principles (Adams et al., 2011). It focused on authentic data sources and the researcher's own positionality to examine how soft skills are operationalized and transformed within workplace culture.

In this method, I reflect on my professional practices, interpersonal routines, and cultural adjustments while working in Japan. Workplace documents, organizational rituals, and communication practices were examined alongside personal narratives to highlight how ASEAN-informed soft skills were integrated into and adapted within different professional cultures. This dual lens combines subjective insight with documentary analysis to provide a holistic view of intercultural professional dynamics.

Figure 4.1. The Autoethnographic Framework Applied in the Study: A cyclical process of personal reflection, cultural interpretation, document analysis, and theme construction.



As illustrated in Figure 1, this framework operates as a continuous cycle of four interconnected stages: personal experience, cultural reflection, document analysis, and theme building. These stages reflect the layered, reflexive nature of autoethnographic inquiry and guided the structure of this study's research and analysis.

Autoethnography as a Methodological Tool

Autoethnography is an established qualitative method for exploring the intersection of individual experience and cultural meaning (Chang, 2008). This approach was particularly effective in analyzing how ASEAN professionals navigate non-ASEAN workplace environments, especially those that emphasize formality, hierarchy, and efficiency over relational harmony.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) described autoethnography to reflect on cultural practices through narrative. In this study, I draw from personal interactions and experiences to explore how soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and leadership evolve when transferred from ASEAN to Japanese work contexts. For example, Suthipongchai (2019) examined how Thai professionals in Western workplaces adapted indirect communication norms like *Kreng Jai* within more assertive environments.

Supporting literature (Adams et al., 2015; Rodriguez & Choo, 2020; Fukushima, 2011) showed that ASEAN professionals often adjust communication styles, decision-making routines, and leadership behaviors when working abroad. These findings affirmed the need for a reflective, narrative-based methodology to surface how such shifts occurred in practice.

Key cultural contrasts explored include:

- *Communication*: ASEAN educators often use indirect, high-context communication to preserve group harmony. Japanese workplaces may favor more direct, efficiency-focused messaging (Nonaka & Johansson, 1985).
- *Decision-making*: The ASEAN Way values consensus, while Japanese corporate structures may rely on hierarchical, formal processes (Acharya, 2001).
- *Leadership*: ASEAN leadership often reflects a participatory, empathetic approach, whereas Japanese norms may expect more formal authority (Yukawa, 2018).

These contrasts reveal how ASEAN professionals navigate intercultural spaces, making autoethnography a powerful method to investigate personal adaptation and cultural negotiation.

Reflexivity in Research

As both researcher and participant, I engage in ongoing reflexive analysis. This involves:

- Acknowledging personal biases and cultural assumptions.
- Critically examining how my identity and background shape the interpretation of data.
- Transparently documenting internal reasoning, interpretation, and emotional responses.

This self-awareness strengthened the integrity and trustworthiness of the study, ensuring that findings were not only context-rich but also self-aware and analytically sound.

Through reflexivity and document triangulation, this study contributed nuanced insights into the integration of ASEAN cultural values in professional settings outside the region.

Access to Naturally Occurring Data

Naturally occurring documents served as primary data for capturing authentic patterns of workplace behavior and interaction. These materials reflect real-time, real-context communication and procedures

Document-Based Analysis

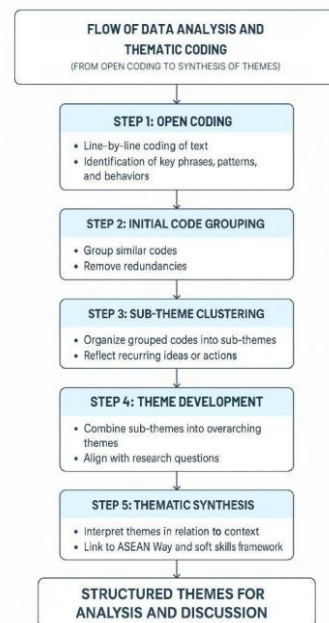
This method draws on organizational records to examine how interpersonal skills were represented and enacted in practice. Hodder (2003) noted that documents provide a rich source of cultural insight by revealing implicit values and unspoken norms.

The documents analyzed include:

- Internal Reports and Organizational Documents: Reflect routines, structures, and values in decision-making and collaboration (Bryman, 2016).
- Emails and Memos: Capture real-time communication, problem-solving approaches, and hierarchical relationships (Ten Have, 2004).
- Training Programs and Manuals: Reveal competency expectations and soft skill frameworks within organizational settings (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

These materials were coded using a grounded theory approach to uncover patterns in communication, leadership, and collaboration. Each excerpt was tagged based on observed behavior or phrasing, then clustered into broader sub-themes and core themes through iterative review.

Figure 4.2. Flow of Data Analysis and Thematic Coding: Steps from open coding of documents to the clustering of sub-themes and synthesis of overarching themes.



As shown in Figure 2, the analysis followed a multi-layered process, beginning with open coding and culminating in the synthesis of recurring themes. This visual outline shows raw textual data evolved into structured insights aligned with the research questions.

Theme Development and Mapping

To ensure a systematic and grounded analysis, I employed a multi-phase coding process. The analysis began with open coding of document excerpts, which were then grouped into sub-themes based on recurring patterns. These sub-themes

were further clustered into overarching themes aligned with each research question. This process followed grounded theorizing principles, allowing categories and meanings to emerge inductively from the data.

Figure 4.3. Thematic map showing the three core perspectives of an ASEAN educator— People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence—each with corresponding sub-themes that reflect culturally grounded interpretations of soft skills in a non-ASEAN workplace.

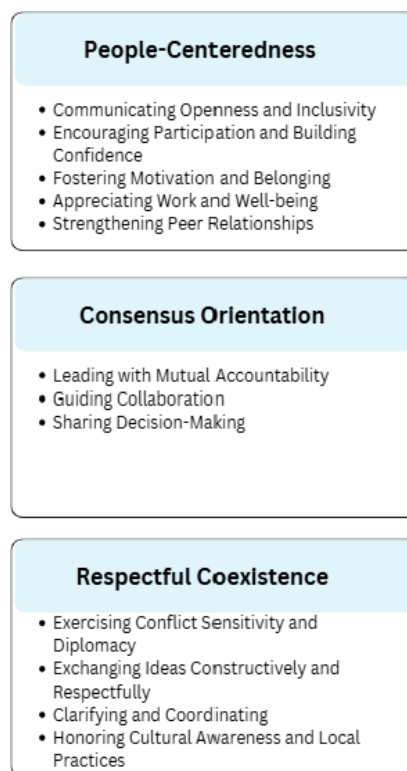


Table 4.1

The table below presents the analytical data, including the source, excerpt, clustered codes, corresponding sub-themes, and overarching themes

Source	Excerpts	Codes	Routines/ Practices (Sub-Themes)	Perspectives (Themes)
Newsletter 1	Feel free to share what works and what doesn't...	Inviting Input	Communicating Openness and Inclusivity	People Centeredness
<i>Newsletter 2</i>	co-creation space, everyone's voice matters.			
<i>Newsletter 3</i>	<i>Feel free to speak up in case you have further comments.</i>			
<i>Newsletter 4</i>	<i>Join our Friday brainstorming.</i>			
Memo 1	I invited the quieter members to submit their ideas via email...			
<i>Memo 2</i>	I asked if the intern could be added to the follow-up meeting...			
Memo 3	I asked if the intern could be added to the follow-up meeting...			
Memo 4	I used a first name basis in the meeting...			
Memo 5	I paused before finalizing and asked, "Does anyone feel unsure or need time to reflect? "			
Memo 6	I followed up			

	individually with quiet members...			
Email 1	Please feel free to add any suggestions.			
Email 2	Feel free to reply or post them on our shared board.			
Email 3	Let's continue working closely and share openly			
Email 4	This would allow team members to express appreciation, raise minor issues constructively...			
Email 5	Please feel free to speak up during our meeting, for quieter members please feel free to send me some of your comments.			
Memo 7	Write the minutes of your meeting in simpler terms and with clarity	Clarity & Accessibility		
Memo 8	Suggested pausing briefly between agenda and points.			
Memo 9	Provided recap with visuals and simple takeaways			
Memo 10	Volunteered to document meeting highlight			
Memo 11	I asked the quietest team member to be the timekeeper.	Soft Leadership Opportunities	Encouraging Participation & Building Confidence	
Memo 12	I let the intern take the lead on the presentation			
Memo 13	I created rotating facilitator role.			
Memo 14	I stepped back			

	from leading and let the team brainstorm independently			
Memo 15	During today's meeting, I asked if we could rotate facilitators.			
Memo 16	I encouraged a junior member to share her insights first.			
Newsletter 5	Extra minutes you spend explaining really help build confidence	Confidence Encouragement		
Newsletter 6	Checked in on teammates who've been unusually quiet			
Newsletter 7	Many of you went above and beyond	Recognition of Effort	Appreciating Work & Well-Being	
Newsletter 8	Reflective feedback lately... approaching improvement			
Memo 17	I praised both proposals to preserve harmony			
Memo 18	I gave credit to the whole team in my email summary.			
Memo 19	I praised team members who offered quiet support.			
Email 6	Thank you very much for your excellent effort on the global orientation...			
Email 7	Your points are noted and appreciated.			
Email 8	Thank you for listening to my			

	concerns about the project delay.			
Email 9	Thanks again for your active participation yesterday.			
Email 10	Great job leading the breakout group today			
Email 11	Your insights are very helpful			
Email 12	To help us celebrate small wins and teamwork			
Email 13	Keep it up – it really made a difference			
Email 14	Thank you for submitting the workshop outline			
Email 15	I appreciate your continuous support			
Email 16	I understand the workload this week has been high	Emotional Sensitivity		
Email 17	I was feeling a bit overwhelmed but didn't know how to bring it up.			
Newsletter 9	I appreciate your calm presence and how you help others feel seen			
Memo 20	I followed up individually with quiet members			
Memo 21	I noted that some colleagues were hesitant to speak up			
Training 1	Employees that are warm, people-centered are welcome... greeting from leadership or welcome video	Welcoming Culture	Fostering Motivation & Belonging	

Training 2	Overview of the training agenda expected outcomes, and support systems.			
Training 3	Participants share their background and what brought them to the organization	Personal Motivation		
Training 4	Values mapping activity.. reflect on what motivates them personally			
Training 5	Participants encouraged to name strengths and improvement areas			
Newsletter 10	...we can make the transition smooth by supporting each	Peer Support in Practice	Strengthening Peer Relationship	
Newsletter 11	Your flexibility during the last-minute timeline shift makes the work lighter...			
Newsletter 12	Supported the slower departments without prompting			
Newsletter 13	Covering for each other during overlapping deadlines.			
Memo 22	Reminded the group to support members who might fall behind due to workload changes.			
Memo 23	I created a shared task board to help distribute smaller duties fairly			
Training 6	Relaxed	Relationship		

	icebreaker such as “two truths and a dream”	& Role Building		
Training 7	Closing group circle share one key insight or intention			
Training 8	Participants reflect on preferred team roles			
Training 8	Participants reflects on preferred team roles.			
Training 9	Trust accountability, shared goals and discussion			
Training 10	Pair interviews and mini presentations	Peer Engagement & Reflection		
Training 11	Peer-editing for tone and brevity			
Training 12	Post-simulation feedback and peer reflection			
Email 18	May I suggest we introduced a simple peer recognition as well.	Initiative & Contribution	Leading with Mutual Accountability	Consensus Orientation
Email 19	May I suggest we create shared template for client responses.			
Email 20	Let’s discuss how we integrate this with the global competency program			
Email 21	Happy to draft a concept if you think it is worth exploring			
Training 13	Define responsibility mindset; follow through initiatives			
Newsletter	We don’t just	Collective		

14	finish – we finish together	Responsibility	
Newsletter 15	Raise your hand early – so we can solve things faster together		
Memo 24	I reminded the team during the check in that our outcomes reflect the whole group not just the leads.		
Memo 25	I stayed late to finish the slide deck because the team agreed it would reflect all our efforts		
Training 14	Identified team-level ownership challenges		
Memo 26	Before the task’s assignment, I emphasized our shared responsibilities	Shared Standards & Expectations	Guiding Collaboration
Training 15	Review slack, teams and in meeting communications	Active Collaboration through Simulations	
Training 16	Teams’ complete simulations with communications and planning		
Training 17	Team challenge; puzzle or problem-solving activity		
Memo 27	Assigned pairs so that less confident team members could work with more experienced ones	Empowerment & Mentoring	
Newsletter 16	Walks the teammates through processes		
Memo 28	I helped summarize the		

	decision in plain English for our newer teammates			
Memo 29	I reminded the team that the report is due by Friday but I offered to help check the final draft.	Clarity & Task Support		
Memo 30	I shared a checklist to help the team self-monitor progress during the deliverables period.			
Memo 31	When two departments clashed, I summarized their points neutrally to mediate.	Shared Decision Making	Shared Decision Making	
Newsletter 17	Phrasing things like I noticed ... or have we tried...	Constructive Dialogue & Tone Sensitivity	Exercising Conflict Sensitivity and Diplomacy	Respectful Coexistence
Memos 32	I used softer modals like might and could when suggesting changes in joint projects.			
Memos 33	Instead of overriding decisions, I asked clarifying questions.			
Training 18	Peer-editing for tone and politeness.			
Training 19	Feedback and clarity confidence and body language.			
Email 22	Would you kindly simplify some of the business terms?	Constructive & Soft Email Communication		
Email 23	May I kindly			

	confirm the intended schedule?			
Email 24	Just a small reminder maintain a tone that's concise but friendly.			
Email 25	Just following up about the room reservation...			
Email 26	Would it be okay to propose a template with polite phrasing?			
Email 27	Thank you for your patience and for following up gently.			
Email 28	Some expressions may be difficult for our new members			
Email 29	Some shift reports are written in a very direct tone			
Email 30	I wasn't sure how to respond... we needed some time			
Training 20	Email etiquette, status updates and message framing.	Respectful & Hierarchy-Aware Communication		
Training 21	Tailoring communication based on purpose, hierarchy and urgency.			
Training 22	CLEAR method, tone matching, and avoiding passive voice			
Training 23	Disagree, request, decline respectfully			
Memo 34	I let the manager speak first out of			

	respect then added my suggestions.			
Newsletter 18	A backchannel message to de-escalate a misunderstanding .	Avoidance of Direct Conflict		
Memo 35	I clarified quietly during the meeting that the issue was due to a system error..			
Memo 36	I reframed the delayed not as a mistake.			
Memo 37	To reduce friction between departments, I suggested shared objectives.			
Memo 38	I paused before replying to a sharp comment.			
Memo 39	I avoided interrupting during heated discussion.			
Memo 40	I explained the reason behind our process gently			
Memo 41	I thanked both parties privately after a disagreement.			
Memo 42	I rephrased a performance critique into a suggestion using indirect phrasing; so I mirrored that	Indirect and Non-Confrontation -nal Messaging		
Memo 43	I noticed our Japanese colleagues used indirect phrasing, so I mirrored that			
Memo 44	I deflected a colleague's mistake by using			

	we' language instead of 'you'			
Email 31	Choose not to immediately react when you feel excluded.	Conflict Sensitivity in Email Communication		
Email 32	Sometime it's not about being right but being at peace.			
Email 33	There's a miscommunication on our end			
Email 34	Small misunderstandings if left, unspoken can snowball.			
Email 35	We will consider your suggestion carefully.			
Email 36	Would it be okay to propose a polite template with a polite phrasing.			
Email 37	I noticed we may have different interpretations regarding follow up protocols.			
Training 24	Case studies on miscommunications or unclear development.	Conflict Prevention & De-escalation (Training-based)		
Training 35	Reflective activity on real workplace issue.			
Training 26	Conflict styles quiz avoiding accommodating, etc.			
Memo 45	When the team couldn't decide on a training theme, I suggested we combine two proposals.			
Training 27	De-escalating conversations			

	and rearranging feedback.			
Email 38	To avoid duplication and ensure clarity	Clarification & Coordination (Email-based)	Clarification & Coordination	
Email 39	I just wanted to clarify one item regarding the current role.			
Email 40	During last Friday's meeting I understood the submission should be urgent.			
Email 41	But I noticed the internal tracker reflects Monday's deadline.			
Email 42	The revised sheet will be sent 3:00 pm.			
Email 43	I wanted to check regarding the deadline...			
Memo 46	I double-checked everyone's availability before finalizing the report.	Local Perspective Sharing	Honoring Cultural Awareness & Local Practices	
Memo 47	We opened with cultural reflection activity- shared how this was done in my home country and team responded positively.			

Chapter V

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings derived from the thematic analysis of workplace documents, internal communications, and training plans, interpreted through an autoethnographic lens. These data were systematically coded and clustered into themes and sub-themes using grounded theorizing, as outlined in the thematic mapping table presented in Chapter III.

The findings address the study's two central research questions:

1. What routines or practices does an ASEAN educator employ when developing the ASEAN Way as a soft skills method in a non-ASEAN workplace?
2. What is the perspective of an ASEAN educator on the ASEAN Way as a soft skills method in a non-ASEAN workplace?

Themes and sub-themes were developed through an iterative analysis of recurring codes identified across naturally occurring texts, including business emails, training manuals, and meeting memos. The interpretation of these themes is informed by the author's lived experience as an embedded practitioner, positioning the analysis within the relational and cultural realities of day-to-day work.

This chapter was organized into three sections:

- (1) Routines and Practices of an ASEAN Educator,
- (2) Perspectives of an ASEAN Educator, and

(3) Relationship Between Routines and Perspectives—each section offering distinct but interconnected insights into how the ASEAN Way is practiced and perceived within a non-ASEAN workplace context.

Routines of an ASEAN Educator

To address the first research question—*What routines does an ASEAN educator employ when developing the ASEAN Way as a soft skill method in a non-ASEAN workplace?*—I conducted an inductive analysis of documented workplace practices across emails, memos, newsletters, and training materials. Unlike RQ2, which focused on perspective, RQ1 highlighted the specific, recurring routines and behaviors that reflect my application of ASEAN-informed soft skills in daily work settings. These practices demonstrated how cultural values were not only internalized but actively enacted through interaction, facilitation, and leadership.

The resulting twelve sub-themes reflect a range of interpersonal strategies that promote inclusion, shared responsibility, emotional safety, and respectful communication. These routines illustrate how the ASEAN Way was translated into habitual action, shaping team dynamics, decision-making, and professional relationships within a multicultural workplace.

Communicating Openness and Inclusivity

As an ASEAN educator, one of my core routines involved ensuring that communication spaces remained open and inclusive in tone and structure. I frequently initiated team messages and meeting discussions with invitations such as, “Feel free to share what works and what doesn’t,” or “Please feel free to add any suggestions.” These were not simply courteous phrases; they were intentional signals of

psychological safety, particularly for colleagues who might otherwise hesitate to contribute in hierarchical or fast-paced work environments.

To support varied communication preferences, I also offered multiple channels for input, encouraging quieter members to respond via email or using shared boards that allowed anonymous idea posting. These practices helped decentralize conversation and created alternative pathways for engagement, reducing the dominance of more outspoken voices and allowing participation to be more evenly distributed.

During meetings, I routinely paused to ask if anyone felt unsure or needed more time to reflect, recognizing that not all team members process or speak with the same immediacy. When I observed less vocal participation from certain members, I followed up individually, inviting their input in a way that preserved comfort and dignity. Over time, this quiet follow-up became a routine practice to ensure that decision-making remained inclusive and dialogic. I also made a conscious shift to using first names during discussions, aiming to reduce formality and encourage more natural dialogue across roles and ranks.

Upon reflection, these behaviors were not isolated facilitation techniques but embedded cultural routines informed by the ASEAN Way, where openness, relational sensitivity, and shared cohesion are foundational. By institutionalizing inclusivity through communication, I helped cultivate an environment in which dialogue was not monopolized by a few but equitably shared across the group. In doing so, communication became a collective practice, one that mirrored ASEAN's ethos of participation, respect, and mutual understanding.

This routine reflected the ASEAN Way's prioritization of inclusion, respect, and participatory communication (Acharya, 2009; Wahid & Kamarulzaman, 2020). By creating multiple pathways for input, such as open-ended phrasing and quiet follow-ups, I operationalized what Hofstede (2001) described as collectivist communication: indirect, accommodating, and group-oriented. These practices also mirrored Goleman's (1998) principles of emotional intelligence, particularly social awareness and relationship management, which emphasize creating safe environments for shared dialogue. In this way, inclusive communication becomes not just a facilitation tool, but a culturally grounded routine that upholds relational dignity.

Encouraging Participation and Building Confidence

In my day-to-day interactions, I routinely created structures and moments that encouraged participation, especially from those who might not typically assert themselves in group settings. One of my go-to practices was rotating facilitation roles during meetings. Instead of leading every session myself, I would ask, "Would anyone like to take the lead today?" or suggest that a junior member open the discussion.

These routines were not about delegating for convenience; they were strategic efforts to build confidence through low-stakes leadership opportunities. I often encouraged interns and newer members to present first or to voice their opinions early in discussions. I noticed that when given that space at the beginning, they were more likely to contribute meaningfully throughout. At times, I stepped back entirely during brainstorming sessions, allowing the team to lead while I remained a silent observer or support figure. This helped normalize peer-led discussion and reinforced the idea that contribution was not tied to hierarchy.

During training and team meetings, I made sure to acknowledge moments of courage and initiative with quiet encouragement or public affirmation. For example, I would say, “Thanks for leading the breakout group today” or “Your insights really shaped this session.” Even in informal settings, I emphasized the small wins, those extra minutes someone spent explaining a process to a peer, or the moment someone new raised a thoughtful question. These acknowledgments served not only as recognition but as confidence scaffolding, reinforcing that their contributions mattered.

These routines reflect a perspective shaped by ASEAN values, especially the belief that confidence was built collectively, not individually. Encouraging participation was not about pushing people into the spotlight, but about constructing spaces where they could step forward at their own pace, supported by a team that recognized their voice. In doing so, I fostered a culture where participation felt natural and empowering, not performative or pressured.

Encouraging participation, especially from quieter or less confident colleagues, aligns closely with ASEAN’s cultural logic of empowerment through encouragement rather than assertion (Tan, 2011). This routine exemplified leadership as a relational and developmental process, echoing Spencer & Spencer’s (1993) behavioral indicators of personal effectiveness, such as developing others and active listening.

From an ASEAN perspective, enabling others to find their voice was a soft skill grounded in collective harmony and mutual growth rather than competition. By creating low-pressure spaces for contribution, I helped balance diverse team dynamics while promoting long-term confidence and engagement.

Fostering Motivation and Belonging

Creating a sense of belonging has always been a foundational part of how I approach team development and soft skills. From the outset of onboarding or training sessions, I incorporated routines that made people feel personally welcomed and emotionally grounded. A warm, people-centered opening, whether through a simple greeting from leadership or a short welcome video, was more than a formality. It was an intentional ritual to set a tone of inclusion. I viewed these moments as anchoring points, especially for those new to the team or coming from different cultural or professional backgrounds.

One routine I often implemented was giving participants a space to share what brought them to the organization or what motivates them personally. These reflections, whether shared during values-mapping activities or opening circles, allowed people to be seen as individuals before they were seen as roles. I found that when team members could articulate their personal purpose and feel it was heard, their motivation became more internally driven and relationally sustained.

I also encouraged the naming of personal strengths and areas for growth in a non-competitive way. These routines were not framed as performance tools, but as affirmations of shared development. I emphasized that we all have different starting points and that this diversity is what makes collective work richer. These practices helped counteract the isolation or pressure that can arise in fast-paced, output-driven workplaces.

By embedding small but consistent opportunities for reflection, recognition, and self-expression, I helped cultivate a sense of belonging rooted in authenticity, not assimilation. This routine of making space for the personal within the professional was deeply reflective of ASEAN values, where group cohesion was strengthened by

emotional connection and mutual understanding. Through these actions, I witnessed how motivation was not only sustained by external rewards but by a feeling of mattering, of being seen, heard, and appreciated within the group.

This routine reflects how ASEAN workplace culture often intertwines motivation with emotional connectivity and social integration (Ng & Keong, 2016). By embedding rituals and recognition into routine activities, I enacted Goleman's (1998) concept of emotional resonance, the ability to inspire others through relational attune. ASEAN's people-first orientation supports this, viewing morale as a collective asset rather than an individual state. Rather than transactional motivation, these practices cultivated intrinsic belonging, which, according to Robles (2012), was a key differentiator in effective soft skills leadership.

Appreciating Work and Well-being

A key routine I maintained across various workplace settings was the intentional recognition of both individual and collective efforts. This was not reserved for formal evaluations or end-of-project summaries; rather, it was woven into daily communication. I frequently sent emails expressing thanks, "Thank you for submitting the workshop outline," or "Great job leading the breakout group today," to acknowledge even the smallest contributions. These messages seemed minor on the surface, but they were grounded in my belief that acknowledgment fuels morale and signals that every role has value. In addition to recognition, I also made a point to attend to emotional well-being.

When I sensed that someone was quiet or under pressure, I reached out with

sensitivity, saying things like “I understand the workload has been high this week” or “I appreciate your calm presence and how you help others feel seen.” These were not generic pleasantries; they were targeted routines to affirm both emotional labor and interpersonal support within the team. I also praised team members who offered quiet forms of assistance, those who stepped in without prompting or supporting their peers behind the scenes. Highlighting these invisible efforts was important to me because it reflected a broader cultural value, I hold that contribution was not always loud, but it was always meaningful.

At a collective level, I introduced routines like celebrating small wins or acknowledging team resilience after high-stress periods. These gestures helped foster a rhythm of appreciation that was consistent, not conditional. In memos, I often gave credit to the whole team, even when a task had been completed by a few. The message I wanted to send was clear: we succeed together, and we see each other.

These practices reflect how my ASEAN orientation shaped my understanding of workplace dynamics. Appreciation is a form of soft leadership; it builds trust, diffuses stress, and reminds people they are not working in isolation. By embedding recognition and care into my routines, I ensure that I create a culture where well-being is not an afterthought, but a shared responsibility.

Appreciating others' efforts and being attuned to their well-being reflects a soft skill approach grounded in emotional presence and cultural sensitivity. In ASEAN contexts, appreciation is often expressed relationally, through acts of kindness, acknowledgement of emotional labor, and subtle recognition (Wahid & Kamarulzaman, 2020). These routines aligned with Spencer & Spencer's (1993) emphasis on interpersonal skills such as empathy and service orientation. Furthermore, Goleman

(1998) identified the regulation of group emotions and recognition of individual contributions as vital to leadership effectiveness. By embedding care into daily routines, I reinforced ASEAN values that treat appreciation not as formality but as a pathway to resilience and relational cohesion.

Strengthening Peer Relationships

Strengthening peer relationships was not a formal objective written into our workflows, but it became one of the most important outcomes of the routines I cultivated. I intentionally created opportunities where team members could show up for one another, not just in high-stakes deliverables, but in the everyday rhythm of work. Whether it was reminding the group to support colleagues with shifting workloads or creating a shared task board to fairly distribute small duties, my routines reinforced the message that we work with each other, not just next to each other.

In newsletters and memos, I highlighted acts of peer support, like covering for each other during deadline overlaps or assisting slower departments without being asked. These actions, though small, were signs of an emerging culture of mutual care. I saw that when one person took the initiative to lighten another's load, others followed. I made sure those gestures were noticed, documented, and affirmed, not for praise, but to normalize the behavior as part of who we are as a team. In training, I introduced activities designed to encourage relational bonding, such as reflection circles, role-building exercises, and peer-editing routines. These permitted people to interact more personally, to recognize each other's strengths, and to trust each other's feedback. I found that once those interpersonal bridges were built, collaboration and conflict resolution became more fluid, and people were more likely to clarify misunderstandings directly or step in when someone needed extra help.

These practices reflected my belief, shaped by ASEAN values, that strong peer relationships were essential to both productivity and well-being. In many ASEAN contexts, solidarity among peers was not expected; it was part of the social fabric. By translating this cultural logic into daily routines, I contributed to a workplace where people felt responsible not only for their tasks but for each other's experience of work.

This routine supports the ASEAN Way's emphasis on harmony and relational interdependence (Acharya, 2009; Marshall, 2011). By proactively reinforcing peer connections, I created the foundation for collective engagement and informal support systems, which are central to ASEAN workplace dynamics. This practice is also consistent with emotional intelligence frameworks, particularly those that stress the value of building networks and managing relationships with empathy (Goleman, 1998). In contrast to individualistic models of performance, ASEAN-influenced practices view peer support as essential to sustaining motivation and facilitating trust. These relationship-building efforts become culturally situated soft skills, less about charisma and more about consistent attentiveness to group health.

Leading with Mutual Accountability

A defining routine in my practice was the promotion of shared leadership and mutual accountability. I consistently sought to distribute responsibility in ways that affirmed each member's agency, regardless of their role, tenure, or status. This often involved implementing small but intentional structures, such as rotating facilitator roles or inviting colleagues to lead team presentations, not to delegate tasks for efficiency, but to reinforce the idea that leadership is not confined to title or hierarchy. I found that when responsibility was shared, engagement and commitment deepened.

In emails and memos, I routinely used language that emphasized collective ownership. Phrases such as “*Our outcomes reflect the whole group, not just leads*” or “*Let’s finish this together so everyone’s effort is reflected*” were not intended as motivational slogans but expressed a genuine belief in shared success. When deadlines approached or difficulties emerged, I modeled accountability by staying late or offering hands-on support, not to serve as a symbol of leadership, but because I saw myself as equally accountable for the team’s progress and outcomes.

I also created space for informal leadership to emerge. When a colleague volunteered to draft a new template or offered to summarize a meeting, I made sure to acknowledge these contributions, recognizing them as acts of leadership. These small but frequent gestures, whether drafting key documents, initiating peer recognition, or proposing thoughtful solutions, demonstrated that leadership could be collaborative, distributed, and context driven.

Reflecting on these routines, I recognize how deeply they were informed by an ASEAN-oriented view of leadership, one that emphasizes harmony, relational influence, and collective responsibility over positional authority. By embedding shared leadership into daily workflows, I helped cultivate a culture in which initiative was not dependent on hierarchy, and responsibility did not need to be assigned. Leadership became less about asking “*Who is in charge?*” and more about asking “*How can we move forward together?*”

This sub-theme illustrates the ASEAN perspective of leadership as shared responsibility rather than hierarchical command. My routine of distributing leadership opportunities reflect what Hofstede (2001) described as a preference for low power distance in team engagement, especially when filtered through relational respect.

Encouraging ownership regardless of status aligns with Robles' (2012) characterization of soft skills leadership, which included flexibility, teamwork, and integrity. The ASEAN Way, as described by Wahid & Kamarulzaman (2020), viewed collective success as the goal of leadership, not individual visibility. These routines demonstrated how mutual accountability becomes a daily act of empowerment, fostering a culture where responsibility was shared, not assigned.

Guiding Collaboration

Guiding collaborative work was a routine I approached with both structure and subtlety. I did not believe in leaving teamwork to chance, especially in cross-functional or multicultural teams where power dynamics, confidence levels, and communication styles varied widely. Instead, I embedded gentle scaffolds that supported smoother, more inclusive collaboration. For instance, during simulations or group challenges, I strategically paired less confident members with more experienced colleagues, not to reinforce hierarchy, but to create opportunities for peer mentorship through action.

To further support collective work, I introduced shared tools and routines that enabled alignment without imposing control. These included collaborative checklists, communication walkthroughs, and visual summaries, tools that allowed teams to track progress while respecting different working styles. In one instance, I offered to review the tone and structure of a final report, not to dictate content, but to ease the pressure for colleagues juggling both coordination and delivery. Such gestures reflected how I understood my role in collaboration: to support structure without undermining autonomy.

During meetings, I guided collaboration by summarizing discussions clearly, pausing to check for understanding, and gently steering the conversation when it

drifted. I did not aim to lead every aspect of the interaction; rather, I sought to reduce cognitive load and keep collaboration purposeful. I wanted team members to feel that their contributions were both valued and supported—that someone was helping to ensure their ideas could take shape and connect meaningfully with others.

These routines were deeply rooted in an ASEAN-informed view of teamwork: that collaboration is relational, and it flourishes when supported by empathy, structure, and gentle facilitation. It was not enough to simply bring people together and expect cohesion. Collaboration requires thoughtful scaffolding, templates, check-ins, pairings, and subtle guidance that respects individual pace and perspective. For me, guiding collaboration meant making teamwork feel less like a negotiation of personalities and more like a shared flow of effort.

Guided collaboration reflects a leadership style rooted in relational facilitation, a core tenet of ASEAN workplace culture (Ng & Keong, 2016). By structuring teamwork through tools, role-pairing, and alignment routines, I operationalized what Goleman (1998) calls social skill, the ability to manage team dynamics, clarify roles, and foster group flow. These practices align with Spencer & Spencer's (1993) behavioral indicators for teamwork, including planning, aligning, and supporting others. ASEAN values reinforce the notion that collaboration requires quiet guidance rather than overt direction. The soft scaffolding I employed demonstrates how culturally attuned routines enable group success without imposing control, as Acharya (2009) described, leading through inclusion rather than assertion.

Sharing Decision-Making

When facing team disagreements or divergent viewpoints, I often stepped into a mediator role, not with authority, but with curiosity and care. My routine was never

to impose solutions or override tensions, but to guide the group toward its own resolution through structured, respectful dialogue. In meetings, I would neutrally summarize contrasting perspectives and pose integrative questions such as, *“Is there a way we can combine these two proposals?”* These responses were not scripted facilitation techniques; they were instinctive, shaped by a belief that harmony and decision-making are not mutually exclusive.

In moments where teams struggled to align, whether in choosing project directions or managing overlapping responsibilities, I reframed compromise not as a concession, but as co-creation. I introduced collaborative templates, incorporated feedback loops, and asked clarifying questions to ensure that all concerns were acknowledged before decisions were finalized. These routines emphasized that decision-making could be dialogic, inclusive, and responsive, not rushed, transactional, or top-down.

One small but consistent practice I relied on was the “pause and check” moment. Before concluding a decision, I would ask, *“Is there anything that still feels unresolved?”* or *“Does anyone feel differently?”* These gentle prompts gave space for quieter voices to emerge and encouraged those hesitant to speak to share their perspectives. I observed that when participants felt heard and involved, they were more committed to the decisions taken, even when compromises were made.

This routine of collaborative mediation reflects an ASEAN-rooted understanding of leadership, one grounded in consensus, mutual respect, and emotional diplomacy. In many ASEAN cultures, decision-making was a relational and often gradual process, centered on maintaining harmony and preventing open conflict. My approach mirrored that sensibility. I was not trying to push decisions through; I was guiding them to

emerge organically, through inclusive framing, reflective pacing, and shared ownership of outcomes.

This routine reflected the ASEAN Way's emphasis on consensus and shared authorship in decision-making (Acharya, 2009; Wahid & Kamarulzaman, 2020). Rather than pushing decisions through authority, I invited dialogue, co-reflection, and subtle compromise, practices aligned with Hofstede's (2001) observations of high-context, collectivist cultures where indirect negotiation is common. These methods also reflect emotional intelligence in action: creating psychological space for contribution while managing relational tensions (Goleman, 1998). In soft skills literature, this aligned with Robles' (2012) emphasis on communication, problem-solving, and emotional maturity. In practice, shared decision-making served as a culturally grounded routine that builds buy-in and reduces resistance, especially in multicultural teams.

Exercising Conflict Sensitivity and Diplomacy

Conflict was not something I avoided; it was something I approached with care. In my daily routines, I paid close attention to how tension surfaced and how it could be de-escalated without eroding trust. One of the most consistent practices I employed was adjusting my tone and timing when responding to disagreement. If I sensed that a colleague was upset or that a conversation had become emotionally charged, I would often pause, listen more than I spoke, and respond later, sometimes privately, or sometimes through a follow-up message that reframed the issue more constructively.

I routinely avoided confrontation, especially in public settings. For example, when errors occurred, I would clarify that the issue stemmed from a system glitch rather than an individual mistake, or I would use "we" language to share responsibility and reduce blame. In emails, I often used phrases such as "It seems we may have

interpreted this differently,” rather than pointing to a misunderstanding. These subtle shifts helped soften defensiveness and maintain working relationships.

Another routine I followed was a private debriefing. After any misunderstanding or tense exchange, I made it a point to check in with the individuals involved, thanking them for their input, clarifying intentions, and ensuring they did not leave the interaction feeling blamed or dismissed. I also mirrored indirect communication styles common in the Japanese context, such as using soft acknowledgment, avoiding escalation, and resolving tensions quietly, which aligned well with ASEAN diplomatic norms.

In my training sessions and team development activities, I incorporated strategies to build conflict awareness and emotional regulation. These included role-plays, reflective journaling, and feedback modeling that encouraged participants to approach conflict not as a personal attack but as a manageable communication pattern. By normalizing disagreement and offering tools for de-escalation, I helped shift the team culture toward one that valued emotional diplomacy over confrontation.

My approach to conflict was shaped by the ASEAN Way, where maintaining relational balance, emotional awareness, and indirectness are considered vital for social cohesion. Within this framework, conflict sensitivity is not a sign of avoidance or weakness; it is a form of cultural intelligence. Through these routines, I aimed to demonstrate that careful, intentional communication can transform tense moments into opportunities for greater mutual understanding and trust.

Conflict sensitivity, when rooted in diplomacy and timing, is a soft skill that balances clarity with care. My routines of indirect phrasing, delayed response, and private follow-up reflect ASEAN cultural practices where harmony is maintained through emotional regulation and discretion (Wahid & Kamarulzaman, 2020; Guo &

Kuo, 2015). Rather than avoiding conflict, I reframed it relationally, an approach that aligns with Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity and Goleman's (1998) emphasis on impulse control and empathy. In cross-cultural workplaces, this ASEAN-informed approach to conflict provides a model for respectful disagreement, transforming tension into a shared understanding without compromising professionalism or progress.

Exchanging Ideas Constructively and Respectfully

Maintaining a respectful tone, particularly when offering feedback or addressing sensitive issues, has become one of my most consistent communication routines. I regularly framed suggestions using softeners such as “might,” “could,” or “Would it be okay if...?” especially when proposing changes that might challenge someone else's work. These linguistic choices were not about deflecting responsibility but about preserving relational dignity. I have long believed that feedback is more likely to be received, reflected upon, and acted on when it is delivered with humility and phrased in a way that signals respect.

In both written and spoken communication, I paid close attention to tone, especially in moments of stress or urgency. When I sensed that a response or instruction might sound too direct, I intentionally revised the language, adding nuance, suggesting alternatives, or shifting the tone to emphasize collaboration. Beyond my own communication, I often supported others in doing the same, peer-editing emails for tone, coaching team members on how to phrase critiques constructively, and integrating communication tone modules into training programs.

A key element of this routine was ensuring that feedback felt less like judgment and more like an invitation. Instead of highlighting errors directly, I would use open-

ended phrasing such as, “Have we considered...?” or “Would it help if we looked at it this way?” These questions demonstrated engagement rather than evaluation, and helped to foster dialogue rather than defensiveness. Even in moments of concern or disagreement, I prioritized shared goals and made deliberate space for the other person’s perspective.

This routine reflects an ASEAN-informed ethic of communication, one in which face-saving, relational harmony, and collective sensitivity are considered essential. In intercultural and hierarchical contexts, where communicative expectations differ, thoughtful language choices helped minimize misunderstanding, reduce friction, and cultivate an atmosphere of mutual trust. In this sense, respect was not just a principle, but a daily routine, enacted through conscious phrasing, empathetic timing, and dialogic tone.

This routine illustrates how communication, when shaped by cultural awareness, becomes both a relational and strategic act. My use of softened language and collaborative phrasing mirrors Hofstede’s (2001) insights into collectivist and high-context communication, where indirectness supported group harmony. Goleman’s (1998) emotional intelligence framework also supported this approach, particularly in relation to managing relationships and navigating emotional nuance. ASEAN leadership, as discussed by Wahid & Kamarulzaman (2020), values face-saving and diplomacy, not as avoidance, but as intentional strategies for preserving respect. Through these practices, I enacted soft skills not as performative politeness but as tools for building trust and maintaining inclusive dialogue.

Clarifying and Coordinating

One of the routines I developed early in my role was the consistent habit of gently seeking clarification and promoting alignment, particularly when instructions, expectations, or timelines were ambiguous. In a fast-paced, multicultural workplace, I found that misunderstandings rarely stem from overt conflict, but more often from unspoken assumptions. My routine response was to ask clarifying questions such as, “Just to confirm, is the submission due next Thursday or Monday?” or “Would it be okay if I checked in about the intended scope?”

I regularly clarified timelines, deliverables, and responsibilities across channels, through memos, follow-up emails, and shared progress trackers. For newer team members, I often rephrased complex or vague tasks into simpler language, sometimes pairing instructions with quick visual recaps to reinforce understanding. These efforts were not about micromanagement; they were about ensuring accessibility and shared awareness. I also initiated routine updates during project cycles, offering summaries or checklists to help the team self-monitor and stay aligned.

When I noticed discrepancies between verbal and written communication, I made a conscious effort to frame my clarifications in a neutral, respectful way. For instance, I might write, “I noticed the tracker says Monday, but I remember in the meeting we mentioned Thursday—just checking if there was an update.” This tone allowed potential contradictions to be addressed without triggering defensiveness or undermining anyone’s input.

This routine of clarification became especially critical in cross-cultural settings, where differing communication norms could lead to misinterpretation. For me, clarification was not merely a logistical step; it was a relational practice. It

communicated attentiveness, built trust, and demonstrated that shared accountability was being upheld.

These practices resonate strongly with the ASEAN Way's emphasis on subtlety, responsiveness, and mutual respect. I did not assume that everyone would speak up when uncertain; that was why I cultivated a rhythm where clarification was expected and normalized. Coordination, in this context, became a form of relational care: ensuring that no one was left uncertain, and that collective work could move forward with clarity and cohesion.

Thus, clarification as a routine reflects a proactive approach to reducing ambiguity while maintaining relational tone. In cross-cultural teams, where communication styles differ, clarification ensures shared understanding without undermining confidence, an important balance discussed by Triandis (1995) in intercultural behavior. These coordination strategies also align with Spencer &

Spencer's (1993) descriptions of behavioral clarity as a form of interpersonal effectiveness. ASEAN workplace norms prioritize attentiveness and subtle leadership, where alignment is maintained through gentle inquiry rather than correction (Ng & Keong, 2016). By normalizing clarification, I reinforced the idea that transparency and trust go hand in hand in diverse professional space.

Honoring Cultural Awareness and Local Practices

Honoring local practices and cultural nuances was never a separate agenda item in my work; it was something I embedded into my routines naturally. Coming from the ASEAN region, I carried with me an awareness that culture is not just a backdrop but a living part of workplace interaction. One of my regular practices was to share my own cultural perspective during reflective activities. For example, in one training

session, I introduced a cultural reflection exercise by sharing how a particular process was handled in my home country. The team responded positively and created space for others to share their own cultural frameworks as well.

In day-to-day communication, I made a conscious effort to mirror local communication styles, particularly in Japanese contexts, where indirect phrasing, formality, and subtle hierarchy matter. I adjusted my tone, used polite phrasing, and followed local norms when addressing senior members or cross-departmental leads. These adaptations were not done out of obligation, but out of respect. I saw it as part of building trust and showing that I was listening, not just to words, but to context. I also created space in meetings for culturally diverse expressions to emerge. Whether it was allowing time for people to reflect before responding or accepting silence as a form of engagement rather than discomfort, I shaped my routines to be culturally inclusive. This also meant avoiding assumptions, asking open questions, and not rushing consensus, especially when working with colleagues from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

These routines reflect my understanding that culture is not something to be “managed”; it is something to be honored, responded to, and woven into our way of working. As an ASEAN educator, I saw honoring local practices as a form of leadership. It allowed me to model humility, deepen relationships, and create a professional space where difference was not erased but embraced.

This approach is deeply aligned with the ASEAN Way’s emphasis on respect for diversity, mutual recognition, and intercultural harmony. Through these routines, I enacted soft skills not just as technical competencies, but as cultural practices, ones that made room for both my identity and the identities of those I worked with.

This routine reflects the deep cultural humility embedded in the ASEAN Way.

Respect for local norms, whether through mirroring indirect speech, recognizing hierarchy, or adjusting tone, demonstrated what Hofstede (2001) calls cultural intelligence in action. Wahid & Kamarulzaman (2020) emphasized that ASEAN leaders often operate with an acute awareness of context and difference, integrating cultural sensitivity into daily interactions. By aligning my communication to local expectations while maintaining my own values, I exemplified what Goleman (1998) terms social awareness, an emotional skill that allows for the negotiation of complex, multicultural relationships with tact and authenticity. This form of soft skills practice becomes not just respectful, but transformational in building mutual understanding across cultural boundaries.

Perspectives of an ASEAN Educator

Three key themes emerged from the analysis of RQ2, which explored the perspective of an ASEAN educator on the ASEAN Way as a soft skill method in a non-ASEAN workplace. Using inductive thematic analysis, I examined excerpts from workplace documents, including emails, memos, newsletters, and training materials.

These data revealed consistent patterns in how I approached communication, collaboration, and leadership, not merely as strategies, but as expressions of an embedded cultural perspective.

The resulting themes, People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence, represent more than just recurring behaviors. They reflect deeply held beliefs and instincts shaped by ASEAN cultural values. Each theme articulates how I understood, embodied, and enacted soft skills in a non-ASEAN

context, offering insight into how the ASEAN Way influences professional engagement in multicultural workplaces.

People-Centeredness

The theme of *People-Centeredness* emerged strongly across multiple workplace documents, reflecting my underlying perspective that professional spaces should first and foremost honor people's emotional needs, voices, and dignity. As I analyzed memos, emails, newsletters, and training materials, I began to recognize a clear and consistent pattern: my instinct to support, include, and uplift others was not incidental; it stemmed from an internalized cultural orientation rooted in ASEAN values. Rather than viewing tasks and roles as separate from the people performing them, I saw each communication and interaction as an opportunity to cultivate inclusion, trust, and shared ownership. In memos, I often paused to ensure that every team member had been heard, inviting quieter colleagues to submit thoughts via email or following up with individuals after meetings. These were not mere facilitation strategies; they were deliberate attempts to signal that every voice mattered, regardless of title or confidence level. In newsletters and emails, I consistently used open language such as "feel free to share what works and what doesn't", and co-creation through phrases like "let's continue working closely and share ideas openly." These expressions came naturally to me, influenced by a cultural context where collectivism and interpersonal care are core.

My leadership approach also reflected people-centered practices. I often stepped back to create soft leadership opportunities, such as rotating facilitation roles or inviting interns and junior members to speak first. These actions were intended to help build confidence, flatten hierarchy, and cultivate mutual respect, particularly

important in diverse teams where voices can easily be overlooked. Additionally, I ensured clarity and accessibility by rewriting minutes in simpler terms, using visual recaps, and pacing discussions more slowly. I believe that understanding should never be assumed, and that communication should serve everyone, not just the most experienced or outspoken.

The emotional layer of these practices also surfaced in emails where I acknowledged workload stress, praised small wins, and expressed gratitude to colleagues for their support and presence. In training sessions, I incorporated welcoming rituals, personal reflections, and values mapping, emphasizing the individual stories behind each professional identity. Even informal practices like using first names or asking, “Does anyone need more time to reflect?” were rooted in the belief that psychological safety enables authentic engagement.

As I reflect on these practices, I recognize that People-Centeredness is more than a communication style; it is a perspective that shapes how I approach soft skills development in non-ASEAN workplaces. In environments that sometimes emphasize speed, hierarchy, or output, I found myself returning to a relational logic: that empathy is productive, that inclusion leads to innovation, and that honoring people’s lived experiences builds stronger, more resilient teams. This aligns with the ASEAN Way’s emphasis on harmony, respect, and community. Through these reflections, I now understand that my perspective as an ASEAN educator is deeply informed by a cultural lens that prioritizes connection over correction, collective strength over individual assertion, and care as a legitimate form of leadership.

The findings under the theme of People-Centeredness echo the core of emotional intelligence as discussed by Goleman (1998), particularly the dimensions of

empathy, relationship management, and emotional awareness. By centering communication around psychological safety and inclusive expression, I demonstrated a soft skill approach rooted not in emotional neutrality but in emotional presence. These behaviors also reflect the traits outlined by Spencer & Spencer (1993), who emphasized interpersonal understanding and service orientation as markers of effective performance in diverse settings.

Furthermore, the practices described here resonate with Hofstede's (2001) dimension of collectivism, which contrasts with more individualistic cultural expectations often found in non-ASEAN workplaces. My emphasis on emotional safety, clarity, and support aligned with the ASEAN Way's ethos of community-building and shared well-being (Acharya, 2009). In this context, leadership becomes relational rather than positional, built not on authority but on trust and interpersonal respect.

This people-centered lens positions soft skills not as abstract competencies but as culturally informed dispositions. As Wahid & Kamarulzaman (2020) noted, ASEAN soft skills are often expressed through subtle actions that promote harmony and shared growth. By integrating emotional care into communication and leadership, I enacted the ASEAN Way not only as a perspective but as a cultural foundation for inclusive professional engagement.

Consensus Orientation

The second theme that emerged from my inductive analysis is *Consensus Orientation*, a perspective that reflects my cultural inclination to prioritize group alignment, shared voice, and participatory decision-making. In reviewing my memos, emails, newsletters, and training documentation, I recognized a steady undercurrent of actions that centered not on asserting authority or speeding toward decisions, but on

fostering ownership, ensuring mutual understanding, and reinforcing shared responsibility. These were not simply facilitation techniques; they were expressions of my deep-seated belief that effective collaboration stems from inclusion, not control.

Many of the documented practices point to how I encouraged initiative while maintaining a collective frame. In emails, I often phrased ideas as open suggestions, “May I suggest we introduce a simple peer recognition wall?” or “Happy to draft a concept if you think it’s worth exploring”—not to defer unnecessarily, but to promote co-ownership of ideas. Even when I had a clear plan in mind, I presented it as something to be built collaboratively. I viewed team members not as passive recipients of tasks but as contributors to shared goals, and I consistently invited input before finalizing decisions. This reflects my underlying belief that consensus, when genuinely sought, leads to greater engagement and long-term alignment.

I also used memos to reinforce the idea that responsibility is shared. I reminded teams that outcomes reflected everyone’s effort, not just the visible leads, and I often stepped in to support group efforts late into the process, not out of obligation but because I genuinely believed in upholding group accountability. These were conscious choices aimed at cultivating a culture where no one feels left behind and where success is seen as a collective achievement. In training sessions, I emphasized shared standards, peer contribution, and simulations that required synchronized teamwork, again, reflecting my belief that alignment builds momentum.

What stood out most in my data was the subtle balance I maintained between encouraging initiative and reinforcing unity. I created templates that others could build on, set up peer recognition systems, and gently facilitated discussion during team challenges, always steering toward inclusive consensus. Even in small gestures, such

as letting others speak first or validating multiple suggestions before offering a synthesis, I was navigating cultural expectations of diplomacy, harmony, and mutual respect. These were not performative but intuitive and grounded in my ASEAN upbringing, where decision-making is often shaped by careful listening, indirect negotiation, and the desire to maintain cohesion.

As an ASEAN educator in a non-ASEAN setting, my approach to soft skills has been deeply informed by a consensus-oriented mindset. Rather than viewing leadership as directive or top-down, I have practiced a form of facilitative leadership that seeks to amplify others, mediate differences, and invite shared authorship of outcomes. This perspective reflects the ASEAN Way's prioritization of deliberation, group harmony, and collective voice over quick resolution or individual dominance. In a workplace that sometimes values assertiveness as a measure of leadership, I found that inviting consensus allowed more people to contribute meaningfully and reduced resistance to change. My experience has taught me that building consensus is not a slower path; it was a more sustainable one, and it was where soft skills become cultural bridgework rather than just competencies.

The theme of Consensus Orientation illustrates how the ASEAN Way promotes a dialogic and inclusive approach to leadership, aligned with what Robles (2012) identified as "integrity, communication, and flexibility" in soft skill performance. Rather than assert authority, I routinely practiced facilitative leadership, where input, co-creation, and shared ownership were central. This supports Acharya's (2014) analysis of the ASEAN Way as a process of consensus-building through non-confrontational, consultative dialogue.

From a cultural lens, Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance are also relevant. In high power distance cultures like many ASEAN nations, leaders are expected to listen and mediate rather than dominate. This orientation shaped how I presented suggestions, often indirectly or in a form open to revision. What emerged was not indecision, but collective momentum: a process where decisions took longer, but were more sustainable, participatory, and widely accepted.

Jansen et al. (2018) argued that ASEAN-trained professionals often carry with them the capacity for cultural mediation. This theme supports that claim. My tendency to prioritize consensus reflected a belief that sustainable outcomes in diverse workplaces arise not from top-down directives but from shared authorship. In this way, consensus orientation transforms soft skills into cultural mechanisms for building inclusive, long-lasting solutions.

Respectful Coexistence

The third theme that emerged from my inductive analysis is Respectful Coexistence, which reflects a deep-rooted cultural commitment to maintaining harmony, showing sensitivity to differences, and navigating interpersonal challenges with diplomacy. This perspective became particularly visible in the way I handled communication, especially during moments of tension, ambiguity, or misalignment.

Rather than confronting conflict directly or asserting control, I often chose to de-escalate, clarify gently, or adjust my tone and delivery to respect relational dynamics. From emails, memos, meeting notes, and training excerpts, I realized these actions were not just habits; they were reflections of how I interpret professionalism through the lens of mutual respect, cultural awareness, and emotional intelligence. In emails

and meeting settings, I frequently relied on softened language: “Would you kindly simplify...,” “May I kindly confirm...,” or “Just a small reminder...” I used modals like *might*, *could*, and *perhaps* when suggesting changes, particularly in hierarchical or cross-functional discussions. These choices were not about avoiding responsibility, but about preserving rapport and avoiding friction. I often reframed critiques as collaborative suggestions and acknowledged the emotional impact of misunderstandings without blaming others. In one memo, I wrote that I “clarified quietly” to protect both accuracy and dignity, and in another, I praised both sides privately after a disagreement. These responses were shaped by my belief that maintaining interpersonal peace, even during correction or disagreement, is a leadership responsibility.

Several entries also pointed out indirect phrasing used by Japanese colleagues, or intentionally chose “we” language to reduce pressure or deflect blame. In training sessions, I incorporated exercises around tone sensitivity, email framing, and conflict styles, not only to enhance soft communication skills, but also to model a respectful approach to professional differences. In practice, I avoided interrupting during heated discussions and waited for the right moments to reframe tensions into opportunities for shared understanding. This was to support emotional safety while still moving the conversation forward.

Looking back, I now understand that these patterns reflect a perspective shaped by ASEAN sensibilities, where communication is often layered, respectful, and tuned to context. In non-ASEAN workplaces that sometimes prize directness or speed in decision-making, my perspective leaned toward balance: how to be clear without being confrontational, how to uphold standards without eroding trust, and how to make space for difference without forcing conformity. Respectful Coexistence, then, is not

about silence or avoidance; it is about intentionally creating space for people to bring their whole selves, without fear of ridicule or exclusion. Through this lens, I've come to view soft skills as cultural instruments—not just interpersonal tools, but pathways for navigating diversity, hierarchy, and misunderstanding with care and dignity.

The final theme, Respectful Coexistence, aligns strongly with intercultural sensitivity theories (Bennett, 1993) and reinforces the ASEAN Way's emphasis on diplomacy, face-saving, and context-aware communication (Guo & Kuo, 2015). The use of softened language, indirect framing, and timing awareness reflects a deeper cultural commitment to maintaining harmony, particularly during moments of tension.

These findings mirror Wahid & Kamarulzaman's (2020) description of ASEAN diplomacy as a form of "quiet leadership," where preserving relational dignity is prioritized over confrontation. In cross-cultural settings, such communication choices help bridge misalignment and promote trust. As Triandis (1995) noted, cultures that emphasize interdependence often develop nuanced strategies for managing interpersonal conflict, strategies that rely more on subtlety than directness.

By embedding respect into everyday communication, whether through tone, phrasing, or pacing. My approach shows that emotional diplomacy is not passive; it is active relational work. In non-ASEAN contexts that prioritize clarity and speed, these routines served as cultural counterweights, reminding others that professionalism can be practiced without erasure of one's cultural values. In this way, soft skills became more than interpersonal tools; they became vehicles for ethical coexistence.

The routines and practices I employed in the workplace reflect a culturally embedded application of soft skills shaped by the ASEAN Way. Across twelve sub-themes, ranging from inclusivity in communication to honoring local practices, my

actions reveal an intentional effort to create a respectful, collaborative, and emotionally aware environment. These routines were not isolated techniques but part of a broader relational framework that values empathy, shared responsibility, and cultural sensitivity. From rotating leadership roles to gently navigating conflict, and from promoting peer support to adjusting tone for local norms, each practice served as a reflection of my commitment to fostering a human-centered professional culture.

The Relationship Between Perspectives and Routines

The results of this study revealed a dynamic interplay between the routines I enacted in my daily work and the perspectives that shaped my approach to soft skills. While RQ1 identified twelve specific, recurring routines, such as inclusive communication, shared decision-making, and respectful conflict resolution, RQ2 uncovered three core perspectives: People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence. These perspectives, grounded in ASEAN cultural values, served as interpretive lenses through which I made decisions, navigated challenges, and engaged with others in the workplace.

Thematic cross-analysis revealed that perspectives and routines were mutually reinforcing. My perspectives were not abstract beliefs detached from action; they were continually enacted through daily practices. For example, the perspective of People-Centeredness informed routines such as appreciating work and well-being, fostering motivation, and encouraging participation. These actions reflected an internalized conviction that emotionally safe and inclusive environments are foundational to effective teamwork, where people must come before processes.

Similarly, the perspective of *Consensus Orientation* manifested in routines like guiding collaboration, leading with mutual accountability, and sharing decision-making.

These were rooted in my cultural understanding of leadership as a shared process, where responsibility is distributed and outcomes are co-created. Rather than managing collaboration as a task, I approached it as a lived value, one that framed even small moments of agreement as culturally meaningful acts of cohesion.

The perspective of *Respectful Coexistence* shaped my routines around conflict sensitivity, constructive communication, clarification, and cultural awareness. In navigating intercultural tensions, I prioritized diplomacy, timing, and relational tone.

These communication routines reflected a belief that professionalism is inseparable from cultural respect and that communication is a relational act shaped by emotion, power, and social context.

Across these themes, it became clear that routines are not neutral. They are guided by underlying perspectives, perspectives shaped by cultural identity, lived experience, and contextual awareness. Through grounded theorizing and autoethnographic reflection, I came to see my routines not simply as tools for professional success, but as embodied enactments of an ASEAN-informed worldview. The findings from RQ1 and RQ2 reinforce this interdependent relationship. The three core perspectives, *People-Centeredness*, *Consensus Orientation*, and *Respectful Coexistence*, did not exist in isolation; they actively shaped, and were in turn reinforced by the soft skill routines I practiced across communication, leadership, and conflict resolution.

For instance, *People-Centeredness* gave rise to routines that emphasized inclusivity, emotional support, and confidence-building, such as inviting quieter

voices, rotating facilitation, and affirming individual strengths. This approach echoed Goleman's (1998) concept of emotional intelligence but reframes it within a collectivist cultural context shaped by ASEAN's relational ethos.

Consensus Orientation was enacted through shared decision-making, collaborative planning, and team-led facilitation. These practices reflect not only ASEAN preferences for group consultation and harmony (Tan, 2015; Guo & Kuo, 2017) but also reposition consensus as a strategic design principle in daily operations.

Respectful Coexistence was most evident in my communication tone, conflict sensitivity, and responsiveness to cultural norms. Whether through indirect phrasing, private mediation, or diplomatic reframing, I consistently enacted routines that balanced clarity with care, aligning with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions and Sharma's (2018) framing of the ASEAN Way as a relational, non-confrontational model of professionalism.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that perspectives gave meaning to routines, while the outcomes of those routines deepened and validated the perspectives themselves. This interdependence supports Sharma's (2018) assertion that the ASEAN Way functions not only as a diplomatic framework but also as a culturally grounded methodology for soft skills development. Through this lens, soft skills are not universal checklists; they are contextual enactments of cultural values.

In sum, the study demonstrates that perspectives give meaning, and routines give form. This reciprocal relationship offers a culturally anchored understanding of soft skills, not merely as competencies, but as practices that shape inclusive, collaborative, and globally attuned workplaces.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study explores how the ASEAN Way serves as a culturally grounded method for soft skills development in non-ASEAN workplaces, using autoethnography to examine the lived experiences of an ASEAN educator working in a multicultural professional setting. The research focused on two central questions:

(1) *What routines does an ASEAN educator employ when developing the ASEAN Way as a soft skill method in a non-ASEAN workplace? and*

(2) *What is the perspective of an ASEAN educator on the ASEAN Way as a soft skill method in a non-ASEAN workplace?*

Through inductive thematic analysis of workplace documents, including emails, memos, newsletters, and training materials, the study identified twelve sub-themes that reflect the core routines I enacted in my professional role. These routines include practices related to inclusive communication, confidence-building, peer collaboration, shared decision-making, and intercultural sensitivity. Rather than generic workplace strategies, these routines were shaped by a collectivist mindset, diplomatic communication style, and relational leadership, each deeply rooted in ASEAN cultural values.

In addition, the analysis revealed three core perspectives: *People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence*. These perspectives reflect an ASEAN-informed worldview that emphasizes emotional attentiveness, participatory leadership, and cultural diplomacy. They shaped how I

interpreted soft skills, not merely as competencies to be performed, but as relational practices grounded in care, collaboration, and harmony.

The final synthesis demonstrated that these routines and perspectives are mutually reinforcing. Perspectives provided the cultural logic and intention behind daily life behaviors, while routines translate those beliefs into visible, consistent action.

Together, they show that soft skills are not universally enacted competencies but are culturally embedded practices. They are shaped by values, enacted through interaction, and continuously constructed through relationships within specific cultural and organizational contexts.

Conclusion

This study sets out to examine how the ASEAN Way functions as a culturally grounded method for developing soft skills in non-ASEAN workplaces, using the lived experience of an ASEAN educator. Through autoethnography and inductive thematic analysis, the research uncovered the specific routines enacted in daily professional life and the perspectives that shaped those practices, both deeply informed by ASEAN cultural values such as collectivism, harmony, respect, and shared responsibility.

The findings affirm that soft skills are neither culturally neutral nor universally applied. Rather, they are context-dependent, internalized through experience, and enacted through intentional behavioral routines. Twelve key practices—ranging from inclusive communication and shared leadership to intercultural sensitivity—reflected and reinforced ASEAN values. These routines were not isolated strategies, but embodied expressions of relational leadership grounded in empathy, diplomacy, and collaboration.

In parallel, the analysis revealed three core perspectives: People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence, which served as the interpretive lens through which workplace dynamics were navigated. These perspectives emphasized care, participatory decision-making, and respectful engagement, offering insights into how ASEAN-informed worldviews shape the understanding and enactment of soft skills.

More broadly, this study contributed to the evolving discourse on soft skills by reframing them not only as employability traits but as cultural practices, practices that carry ethical, relational, and contextual meaning. The ASEAN Way, often discussed in diplomatic and political spheres, proves equally valuable in organizational life. It offers a culturally rooted framework for fostering more inclusive, emotionally intelligent, and cohesive workplaces in increasingly globalized environments.

By reflecting on a personal professional journey, this study offers both practical insight and theoretical grounding for how ASEAN values can be translated across borders, not as a rigid system, but as a flexible, respectful, and people-first way of working. In doing so, it positions the ASEAN Way as a viable contribution to soft skills development, anchored in culture, lived through routine, and was capable of bridging differences in diverse professional settings.

This thesis has explored how the ASEAN Way can serve as both a perspective and a practice for soft skills development in non-ASEAN workplaces. Through autoethnographic reflection and grounded analysis of daily workplace routines, the study demonstrates that soft skills are not culturally neutral; they are lived, negotiated, and expressed through values, relationships, and everyday decisions.

By centering the voice of an ASEAN educator, this study affirms that ASEAN cultural principles, People-Centeredness, Consensus Orientation, and Respectful Coexistence, contribute meaningfully to global conversations on leadership and communication. In doing so, it repositions the ASEAN Way not only as a diplomatic model but as a soft skill methodology in its own right.

As the world searches for more human-centered, inclusive, and culturally responsive ways of working, the ASEAN Way offers a grounded, value-based approach that bridges differences through mutual respect. This research is just one voice, but in telling this story, it opens space for other culturally rooted perspectives to be recognized, valued, and integrated into the future of global work.

Recommendations

The insights drawn from this study offer a culturally grounded lens on soft skill development, particularly through the lived experience of an ASEAN educator in a non-ASEAN workplace. Rather than prescribing generalizable solutions, these recommendations are presented as reflective invitations merging from a specific cultural context and aligned with the interpretive nature of qualitative research.

1. For Future Researchers

The study affirms the potential of autoethnographic and document-based methods in understanding the transfer and adaptation of cultural values. Future research may expand this by examining:

- How ASEAN professionals negotiate or reshape their cultural frameworks in Western or hybrid organizational contexts.

- ▮ How ASEAN-informed approaches to communication and leadership evolve in sectors such as healthcare, education, digital services, or diplomacy.

- ▮ Actionable Insight: Expand the use of reflective methodologies to bring forward underrepresented voices in workplace studies.

- ▮ Future Direction: Explore how the ASEAN Way interacts with other regional philosophies (e.g., Japanese wa, Korean jeong, or Chinese guanxi) in collaborative environments.

2. For Practice

Rather than prescribing generalizable solutions, these recommendations are presented as reflective invitations, emerging from a specific cultural context and aligned with the interpretive nature of qualitative research.

For Educators, Trainers, and Policymakers in ASEAN Contexts

There is value in embedding ASEAN values, such as diplomacy, humility, emotional nuance, and consensus-building, into soft skills training and leadership programs. These cultural anchors should not be treated as passive traits but recognized as strategic assets that can strengthen ASEAN's positioning in global workforce development.

Actionable Insight: Develop culturally grounded capacity-building programs that reflect relational leadership, group-based learning, and shared responsibility.

Future Direction: Encourage curriculum development that affirms indigenous knowledge systems and workplace practices rooted in empathy and cooperation.

3. For Organizations Outside ASEAN Engaging with ASEAN Talent

The study highlights the need to create organizational environments that honor collectivist orientations, relational leadership, and indirect communication styles. Rather than viewing these as limitations, organizations can embrace them as alternative strengths that foster psychological safety, long-term collaboration, and team resilience.

Actionable Insight: Integrate ASEAN-informed soft skills into diversity training and team development modules to enhance cross-cultural cohesion.

Future Direction: Design an intercultural onboarding that highlights communication preferences and decision-making norms across Asian regions.

4. For Workplace Program Developers and Leaders

This study calls for the development of a cultural guidebook or training toolkit that distills ASEAN soft skills into actionable routines. These routines, such as shared decision-making, inclusive feedback practices, and conflict mediation through diplomacy forms the basis of leadership training in regional and international workplaces.

Actionable Insight: Co-create a framework or manual with ASEAN practitioners that captures best practices in relational leadership and communication. Future Direction: Explore institutional support (e.g., HR, L&D departments) for piloting these models in Asia-based or global teams.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Newsletter Metadata (From, To, and Newsletter Subject)

Category	From	To	Newsletter Subject (Bilingual)
Newsletter 1	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Operations Team Members	Newsletter Updates: Onboarding Q4 2023 / ニュースレター更新: 2023年第4四半期オンボーディング
Newsletter 2	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Newly Onboarded Employees	Winter (Feb 2025) Newsletter / 冬号 (2025年2月) ニュースレター
Newsletter 3	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Newly Onboarded Employees	Autumn (Sept 2025) Newsletter / 秋号 (2025年9月) ニュースレター
Newsletter 4	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	FriYAY! Newsletter – March Issue / FriYAY! ニュースレター – 3月号
Newsletter 5	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Senior Leaders and Department Managers	Invitation: Leadership Meeting – July 18, 2024 / 招待: リーダーシップ会議 2024年7月18日
Newsletter 6	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Senior Leaders and Department Managers	Check-In Monday Newsletter – February Issue / 月曜チェックインニュースレター 2月号
Newsletter 7	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Welcome Our New Joiners! – April 2022 Recruits / 新入社員歓迎! – 2022年4月入社
Newsletter 8	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Executive Management	Quarterly Feedback – Q1 2023 / 四半期フィードバック-2023年第1四半期
Newsletter	ASEAN	Senior	May You Lead the

9	Educator (Training & Development)	Leaders and Department Managers	Way! – December 2022 Issue / リーダー としての道を！ – 2022 年12月号
Newsletter 10	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Welcome Our New Joiners! – December 2022 Recruits / 新入 社員歓迎！ – 2022年 12月入社
Newsletter 11	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Follow-Up Message: Brainstorming Thursdays – March 2025 / フォローアップメッセ ージ: 木曜ブレイン ストーミングー
Newsletter 12	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Global Townhall – March 2024 Newsletter / グローバルタウンホール – 2024年3月ニュースレ ター
Newsletter 13	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Obon-Lasting Hard Work! – August 2024 Obon Holiday Newsletter / お盆も続く努力！ – 2024年8月お盆休みニュ ースレター
Newsletter 14	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Global Townhall – November 2024 Newsletter / グローバルタ ウンホール – 2024年11 月ニュースレター
Newsletter 15	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Employee Q1 2023 Newsletter Updates / 従 業員ニュースレター更新 – 2023年第1四半期
Newsletter 16	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	Welcome Our New Joiners! – April 2024 Recruits / 新入社員歓迎 ！ – 2024年4月入社
Newsletter 17	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	"Sui" per Wednesday! Huddle Tips December 2024 Issue / 水パー水曜日！ハドル のヒントー 2024年12月

			号
Newsletter 18	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	All Staff Members	T&D Department Newsletter 2023 / 人材 開発部ニュースレター 2023

*** Note:** While newsletters were issued on a regular monthly basis, the entries listed above specifically represent those authored and disseminated by the ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)

APPENDIX B

Memos Metadata (From, To, and Subject)

Category	From	To	Newsletter Subject (Bilingual)
Memo 1	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Q2 Website Redesign Project Team / 第2四半期ウェブサイト改修プロジェクトチーム	Assigning Timekeeper Role for Q2 Project Meetings / 第2四半期プロジェクト会議におけるタイムキーパー任命
Memo 2	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	HR Policy Review Committee / 人事方針見直し 員会	Presentation Led by Intern – Client Prep Session / インターン主導によるクライアント準備セッションのプレゼンテーション
Memo 3	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Meeting Coordination Team / 会議調整チーム	Rotating Facilitator Role Introduced for Weekly Check-Ins / 週次チェックインにおけるファシリテーター役のローテーション導入
Memo 4	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Marketing & Development Project Team / マーケティング・開発プロジェクトチーム	Independent Team Brainstorming – Post-Workshop Session / ワークショップ後の独立チームブレインストーミング
Memo 5	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Strategy Alignment Meeting Participants / 戦略調整会議参加者	Proposal: Rotate Meeting Facilitators Starting Next Quarter / 提案：次期からの会議ファシリテーターのローテーション
Memo 6	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Weekly Check-In Feedback Group / 週	Q4 Strategy Review Discussion / 第4四半期戦略レビュー討議

	nt)	次チェック インフィー ドバックグ ループ	
Memo 7	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Product Rollout / 製 品展開プロ ジェクトチ Project Team ーム	Equal Credit for Proposals in Q3 Planning / 第3四半期計 画における提案への平 等な評価
Memo 8	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Sprint 3 Planning Stakeholder s / スプリン ト3計画関 係者	Team wide Acknowledgment in Monthly Performance Report / 月次業績報告 書でのチーム全体の功 績認定
Memo 9	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Design Review Leads & Coordinator s / デザイン レビュー責 任者・調整 担当者	Recognizing Contributions During Product Rollout/ 製品展 開中の貢献の評価
Memo 10	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Weekly Status Meeting Attendees / 週次進捗会 議参加者	Post-Meeting Check- Ins Following Budget Review/ 予算審査後の 会議フォローアップ
Memo 11	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Data Migration Project Team / デー タ移行プロ ジェクトチ ーム	Cross-Team Participation Feedback Session / 部門横断参加 フィードバック会議
Memo 12	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Presentatio n Task Force / プレ ゼンテーシ ョンタスク フォース	Workload Support Planning Meeting / 業 務量支援計画会議
Memo 13	ASEAN Educator	New Workflow Pilot Team /	Shared Task Board Implementation Briefing

	(Training & Development)	新ワークフローパイロットチーム	/ 共有タスクボード導入説明会
Memo 14	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Campaign Launch Brainstorming Group / キャンペーン開始ブレインストーミンググループ	Accountability Briefing for Q4 Deliverables / 第4四半期成果物責任説明会
Memo 15	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Departmental Facilitator Pool/ 部門ファシリテーター候補者	Management Presentation Preparation Session / 経営陣向けプレゼン準備会議
Memo 16	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Market Research Analysis/ 市場調査分析チーム	Client Quality Standards Review / クライアント品質基準見直し
Memo 17	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Q3 Proposal Review Committee / 第3四半期提案審査委員会	Onboarding Mentorship Assignment Meeting / 新人研修支援のためのジュニアとシニアのペアリング
Memo 18	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Department Heads Council / 部長会議	Policy Update Briefing for New Members / 新メンバー向け方針更新説明会
Memo 19	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Logistics Support Unit / 物流支援チーム	Q1 Report Submission Reminder / 第1四半期報告書提出リマインダー
Memo 20	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Follow-Up Coordination Team / フォローアップ調整チーム	Milestone Tracking Checklist Distribution / マイルストーントラッキングチェックリスト配布

Memo 21	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Cross-Functional Task Force/ 部門横断タスクフォース	Resource Allocation Mediation Meeting / 資源配分調整会議
Memo 22	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Staff Support Network / スタッフ支援ネットワーク	Joint Project Proposal Language Review / 共同プロジェクト提案書言語見直し
Memo 23	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Resource Allocation Review Board / 資源配分見直し委員会	Decision Review Session – Clarifying Questions / 意思決定見直し会議– 確認質問
Memo 24	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Digital Transformation Task Board Team / デジタルトランスフォーメーションタスクボードチーム	Cross-Department Briefing – Manager Speaks First Approach / 部門横断ブリーフィング– マネージャー先行発言方式
Memo 25	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Q4 Deliverables Oversight Group / 第4四半期成果物管理グループ	System Error Status Update Meeting / システムエラーステータス更新会議
Memo 26	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Client Presentation Working Group / クライアントプレゼン作業部会	Vendor Delay Communication Plan / ベンダー遅延対応計画
Memo 27	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Interdepartmental Project Leaders Group / 部門横断	Shared Objectives Alignment Session / 共通目標調整会議

	Developme nt)	プロジェクトリー ダーグループ	
Memo 28	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Training Cycle 2 Support Team / 第2 期研修支援 チーム	Conflict-Sensitive Response Training / コ ンフリクト配慮応答研 修
Memo 29	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Policy Implementat ion Oversight Group / 方 針実施監督 グループ	High-Pressure Meeting Protocol Workshop / 高 圧会議対応方針研修
Memo 30	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	All Hands Coordin ation Team/ 全社会 議調整 チーム	Policy Rollout Process Briefing / 方針導入手順 説明会
Memo 31	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Project Milestone Review Group / プ ロジェクト マイルスト ーン評価グ ループ	Post-Resolution Acknowledgment Message / 解決後の感 謝メッセージ
Memo 32	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Conflict Resolution Committee / 対立解決委 員会	Feedback Rewording Techniques Workshop / フィードバック言い換 え技術研修
Memo 33	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Cross- Cultural Project Team / 異文 化プロジェ クトチーム	Indirect Communication Skills Session / 間接的 コミュニケーションスキ ルセッション
Memo 34	ASEAN Educator (Training & Developme nt)	Joint Reporting Team / 共同	Positive Framing for Joint Reports Workshop / 共同報告書 ワークショップ

	nt)	報告チーム	におけるポジティブ表現研修
Memo 35	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Proposal Integration Group / 提案統合グループ	Unified Recommendation Drafting Meeting / 統一提案書作成会議
Memo 36	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Timeline Planning Committee / スケジュール計画委員会	Pre-Timeline Finalization Availability Check / スケジュール確定前の空き状況確認
Memo 37	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Conflict-Sensitive Discussion Group / コンフリクト配慮討議グループ	Pause Before Responding Workshop / 応答前の一時停止研修
Memo 38	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	High-Pressure Meeting Protocol Team / 高圧会議対応方針チーム	No Interruptions Policy Rollout / 割り込み禁止方針導入
Memo 39	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Policy Implementation Task Force / 方針実行タスクフォース	Process Communication Enhancement Session / 手順伝達改善セッション
Memo 40	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Dispute Resolution Working Group / 紛争解決作業部会	Post-Disagreement Follow-Up Meeting / 意見対立後のフォローアップ会議
Memo 41	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Performance Review Committee / 業務評価委員会	Feedback Framing Strategies Briefing / フィードバック表現戦略説明会
Memo 42	ASEAN	Cross-	Cultural Sensitivity

	Educator (Training & Development)	Cultural Communication Team / 異文化コミュニケーションチーム	Language Workshop / 文化的配慮言語研修
Memo 43	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Joint Reporting Working Group / 共同報告作業部会	“We” Language Integration Session / 「私たち」表現統合セッション
Memo 44	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Proposal Integration Committee / 提案統合委員会	Proposal Consolidation Planning / 提案統合計画会議
Memo 45	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Timeline Planning Team/ スケジュール計画チーム	Finalizing Project Timeline Meeting / プロジェクトスケジュール確定会議
Memo 46	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Diversity & Inclusion Initiative Group / ダイバーシティ&インクルージョン推進グループ	Cultural Reflection Opening Session / 文化振り返り開始セッション
Memo 47	ASEAN Educator (Training & Development)	Annual Strategic Planning Committee / 年次戦略計画委員会	Q1–Q4 Planning Alignment Kickoff / 第1～第4四半期計画調整キックオフ

***Note:** While memos are sent depending on the event or need, the memos collected here are specifically those authored and disseminated by the ASEAN Educator under the Training and Development Department.

APPENDIX C

Emails Metadata (To and Email Subject)

Category	To	Email Subjects
Email 1	Project Development Team	Submission of Additional Suggestions for Q3 Strategy Review 第3四半期戦略レビューへの追加提案提出について
Email 2	Knowledge Sharing Committee	Posting Updates on Shared Collaboration Board 共同コラボレーションボードへの更新投稿について
Email 3	Cross-Functional Task Force	Strengthening Collaboration for Client Rollout クライアント向けローンチに向けた連携強化
Email 4	Employee Engagement Group	Feedback Mechanism for Constructive Issue Reporting 建設的な課題報告のためのフィードバック体制
Email 5	Annual Planning Workshop Participants	Inclusive Participation During Strategic Planning Session 戦略計画セッションにおける全員参加の促進
Email 6	Global Training & Orientation Team	Appreciation for Efforts in Global Orientation Program グローバルオリエンテーションプログラムへの尽力への感謝
Email 7	Risk Management Committee	Acknowledgment of Risk Assessment Recommendations リスク評価に関する提言の承認
Email 8	Project Recovery Task Group	Acknowledgment of Concerns Regarding Project Delay プロジェクト遅延に関する懸念の承認
Email 9	CSR Volunteers	Appreciation for Active Participation in CSR Planning Session CSR企画会議での積極的な参加への感謝
Email 10	Breakout Session Leaders	Commendation for Effective Facilitation 効果的なファシリテーションへの称賛
Email 11	Product Innovation	Recognition of Valuable Insights in

	Team	Product Development Discussion 製品開発討議における有益な洞察の評価
Email 12	Team Building Committee	Initiative to Celebrate Small Wins in Quarterly Report 四半期報告における小さな成功の祝賀イニシアチブ
Email 13	Process Improvement Unit	Acknowledgment of Contributions to Efficiency Gains 効率向上への貢献の承認
Email 14	Training & Development Committee	Confirmation of Workshop Outline Submission ワークショップ概要提出の確認
Email 15	Interdepartmental Support Group	Appreciation for Consistent Operational Support 継続的な業務サポートへの感謝
Email 16	Project Delivery Team	Acknowledgment of Heavy Workload During Peak Week ピーク週における多忙な業務負担の承認
Email 17	Wellness and Support Committee	Expression of Personal Workload Concerns 個人的な業務負担に関する懸念の表明
Email 18	Employee Engagement Committee	Proposal for Peer Recognition Wall Initiative ピア認定ウォール導入の提案
Email 19	Client Relations Team	Proposal to Standardize Client Response Templates クライアント対応テンプレート標準化の提案
Email 20	Global Competency Program Committee	Integration Discussion with Global Competency Program グローバルコンピテンシープログラムとの統合協議
Email 21	Strategic Planning Group	Offer to Draft Concept for New Initiative 新規イニシアチブ構想案の作成提案
Email 22	Corporate Communications Team	Request to Simplify Business Terminology in Communications 社内コミュニケーションにおけるビジネス用語簡素化の依頼
Email 23	Operations Coordination Team	Confirmation Request for Project Schedule プロジェクトスケジュールの確認依頼

Email 24	Corporate Communications Team	Reminder to Maintain Friendly yet Concise Tone 簡潔かつ親しみやすい口調維持のリマインダー
Email 25	Facilities Management Team	Follow-Up on Meeting Room Reservation 会議室予約に関するフォローアップ
Email 26	Corporate Communications Team	Proposal for Polite Phrasing Template in Correspondence 社内外文書における丁寧な表現テンプレート提案
Email 27	Client Service Excellence Committee	Appreciation for Patience and Courteous Follow-Ups 忍耐強く丁寧なフォローアップへの感謝
Email 28	Training & Development Committee	Addressing Complex Expressions for New Members 新メンバー向け複雑表現の対応
Email 29	Shift Supervisors Group	Review of Tone in Shift Reports シフト報告書における口調の見直し
Email 30	HR Support Team	Request for Time to Respond to Sensitive Matters 機微な案件への対応時間確保の依頼
Email 31	HR Support Team	Reflection on Feeling Excluded During Discussion 討議中に感じた疎外感に関する振り返り
Email 32	Wellness and Support Committee	Emphasis on Prioritizing Peace Over Being Right 正しさよりも平和を優先する姿勢の強調
Email 33	Operations Management Team	Addressing Internal Miscommunication 社内誤解への対応
Email 34	Operations Management Team	Prevention of Small Misunderstandings Escalating 小さな誤解の拡大防止
Email 35	Executive Committee	Consideration of Submitted Proposal 提出提案の検討
Email 36	Corporate Communications Team	Proposal for Polite Phrasing Template in Internal Communication 社内コミュニケーション用丁寧表現テンプレートの提案
Email 37	Project	Addressing Different

	Coordination Team	Interpretations of Follow-Up Protocols フォローアップ手順の解釈差異への対応
Email 38	Documentation and Reporting Team	Clarifying Roles to Avoid Duplication 重複防止のための役割明確化
Email 39	HR Support Team	Clarification Request Regarding Current Role 現職務に関する確認依頼
Email 40	Project Coordination Team	Confirmation of Submission Deadline from Last Meeting 前回会議での提出期限の確認
Email 41	Project Coordination Team	Correction of Submission Deadline in Internal Tracker 社内トラッカー内提出期限の修正
Email 42	Documentation and Reporting Team	Notification of Revised Document Submission Time 修正版資料提出時間の通知
Email 43	Project Coordination Team	Inquiry Regarding Project Submission Deadline プロジェクト提出期限に関する照会

***Note:** These are the collected emails written and composed by the ASEAN educator, directly sent to the receivers above.

APPENDIX D

Training Materials Metadata (To, Programs and Dates)

Category	To	Programs	Dates
Training 1	New Employees	Onboarding Program	Jan 2023
Training 2	New Employees	Onboarding Orientation	Jan 2023
Training 3	New Employees	Onboarding Icebreaker Activity	Jan 2023
Training 4	Onboarding Cohort	Values Workshop	Feb 2023
Training 5	Onboarding Cohort	Self-Assessment Session	Feb 2023
Training 6	Onboarding Cohort	Team Building Kickoff	Feb 2023
Training 7	Onboarding Cohort	Reflection Session	Mar 2023
Training 8	Project Teams	Team Roles Exploration	Apr 2023
Training 9	Project Teams	Team Cohesion Workshop	Apr 2023
Training 11	All Staff	Business Writing Workshop	May 2023
Training 12	All Staff	Simulation Exercise Review	May 2023
Training 13	All Staff	Ownership Training	May 2023
Training 14	All Staff	Team Responsibility Session	Jun 2023
Training 15	All Staff	Digital Communication Training	Jun 2023
Training 16	All Staff	Team Simulation Challenge	Jun 2023
Training 17	All Staff	Problem-	Jun 2023

		Solving Workshop	
Training 18	All Staff	Writing Skills Refresher	Jul 2023
Training 19	All Staff	Presentation Skills Workshop	Jul 2023
Training 20	All Staff	Professional Communication Training	Jul 2023
Training 21	All Staff	Advanced Communication Workshop	Aug 2023
Training 22	All Staff	Effective Writing Training	Aug 2023
Training 23	All Staff	Assertive Communication Workshop	Aug 2023
Training 24	All Staff	Conflict Resolution Training	Sep 2023
Training 25	All Staff	Workplace Reflection Session	Sep 2023
Training 26	All Staff	Conflict Management Workshop	Sep 2023

***Note:** The following training programs were authored by the ASEAN educator, and the excerpts have been extracted from the authored training plans.