

Effective Partnership between Public Library and School to revamp the Public Library Movement: a case study of Kushmandi Rural Library

Moutusi Paul

Kushmandi Rural Library, Kushmandi, Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal, India

Email: paul.moutusi.987@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the potential of public libraries to support education by collaborating with schools. It highlights how relevant the public libraries are even after the rise of digital resources. The public library can also compensate the insufficient resources of school libraries in West Bengal. It uses the Kushmandi Rural Library as a case study to demonstrate how such collaboration can benefit students and teachers. The paper emphasizes the importance of public libraries complementing school libraries, as suggested by IFLA/UNESCO guidelines.

Keywords: *Rural libraries, public libraries, library services, collaborative works, public libraries, school library.*

Introduction:

In this 21st century libraries become information hubs. Libraries are much more than a place to read books and journals. Now the library is not only a book collection center but also a resource sharing center. Libraries also center on advanced electronic resources, including the Internet, digital library collections, and remote access to a wide range of databases of various subjects. There are mainly four types of libraries all over the world. Like: Academic Library (School Libraries, College Libraries, University Libraries etc.), Public Library (Rural Library, Town Library, and District Library, etc.), and Special Library which caters services to special kinds of user groups. The main services of public libraries are to give information as well as printed materials to the general users according to

their purposes. But in this digital age, one can fulfill their academic needs by using various digital devices to some extent. Therefore the purpose and usefulness of public libraries is somewhat in question.

On the other hand, due to the insufficiency of resources and infrastructure, the school libraries in West Bengal also failed to give services to the students. But if academic institutions and public libraries work together, this problem can be solved and the benefits of having public libraries can be realized again. This paper is a case study of how a public library can help school students and teachers in their academic needs.

The IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development remind us of the educational role of the public library, as well as the collaborative work that this

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institution should carry out along with the school library: "Where adequate library facilities exist to support formal education the public library should complement them rather than duplicating library provision available elsewhere." Later on, the same publication highlights the importance of the relationship between public libraries and schools: "One of the most important institutional relationships for a public library is that with the local schools and the education system in the service area."

In this paper, a case study has been performed on how Kushmandi Rural Library of Dakshin Dinajpur provides academic resources and helps the students of Kushmandi High School in their academic purposes. The collaborative works between the library and the school make both of them useful in their own ways.

Literature review:

Mejenkin (1966) pointed out that the obstacle in improving library service to secondary school students and a valid criticism of schools is the lack of time to use the library within the school day and before and after school hours. Individual schedules do not include group or independent study time, and many teachers fill the class periods with presentation of subject content. The student often travels miles to and from school on buses, public transportation, or on automobiles. Once he has left his school, using a nearby public library is frequently more convenient.

Fitzgibbons (1989) proposed that establishing a regular schedule for class visits to the public library presents an effective strategy for enhancing students' awareness and utilization of library resources. This structured approach can yield significant benefits for students across various educational levels. For primary grades, libraries can focus on activities such as storytelling, book checkout, and an introduction to the library within a thirty-minute session. In contrast, middle and high school presentations should center on book

talking, which can highlight new titles or emphasize themes relevant to students. Establishing relationships with both teachers and students significantly encourages their use of public library facilities and resources as needed. This interaction can create a supportive environment for lifelong learning and exploration. Overall, the outlined strategies for integrating library visits into educational schedules can effectively enhance students' engagement with public library resources and promote a culture of reading and learning.

Mathews, Flum, and Whitney (1990) anticipated and emphasized the important role that both public and school libraries were going to play in the 21st century: "For children and young adults in school, the school library, which carries out its important role in structured learning as its priority, also meets the personal, recreational, and information learning needs of many children. The public library provides the transition from babyhood into formal learning, the resources and services for personal information and recreation, and the transition from structured learning into self-determined lifelong learning. When both types of libraries are well supported, they can team up to provide a seamless information and enjoyment resource.

Bini (2003) said that Nigeria is a developing country where the majority of the population lives in rural areas. The majority of these rural dwellers are either non-literate or semi-literate. The need to involve them in the national development process cannot be overemphasized. This can be achieved through the identification of the information needs of rural dwellers and the provision of innovative rural public library services to improve their level of literacy and education and to enhance their ability to use practical information relevant to their daily lives.

Ingvaldsen (2012) explicitly mentions several benefits of collaboration between schools and public libraries in Norway, focusing on enhancing reading education and information literacy. Public

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libraries have larger and more updated physical and digital collections compared to school libraries. Collaboration allows schools to access the expertise and resources available at public libraries, enhancing the quality and variety of materials available to students. Collaborative projects lead to students becoming more motivated readers, increasing their reading pleasure and skills. Joint efforts between libraries and schools aim to maintain students' interest in reading, especially at middle and lower secondary school levels. Teachers and librarians working together enhance student learning outcomes, particularly in the information search process. Collaboration helps in developing learning strategies and information literacy skills among students. Students benefit from guided reading sessions, library knowledge instruction, and structured interdisciplinary work facilitated by joint efforts between libraries and schools. Public libraries engaging with schools leads to increased community involvement, with parents and caregivers becoming valuable resources in promoting reading.

Jennifer LaMaster explores the collaborative efforts between Indiana public libraries and elementary school media centers. The study investigates historical perspectives on library collaboration, current practices, barriers to collaboration, and successful collaborative efforts. The survey conducted in Indiana county seats reveals that while communication between public libraries and school media centers is relatively high, true collaboration, as defined by co-planning, co-implementation, and co-evaluation, is lacking. The study highlights the importance of informal networks, reducing territorialism, and developing shared goals to improve collaboration between public and school libraries for the benefit of children and young adults.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this study are:

- To study the library services provided to the school students;
- To know the barriers faced by the library in providing the services;
- To identify the level and procedure of collaborations of the school and the rural library.

The findings of the study would help to address the following pertinent questions in this context.

1. What type of library services can be given by public libraries to school students?
2. What are the barriers to providing services the school students?
3. What type of collaborative work can be adopted for the activeness of public libraries?

Research Methodology:

Qualitative and quantitative research method have been followed in this study. The author made a structured questionnaire and distributed it among 100 students of Kushmandi High School who were the patrons of Kushmandi Rural Library.

Responses were collected from students over a month. The total number of respondents was 63 and the results were analyzed based on the responses of the 63 respondents. For analysis, data tabulations, and graphical representations of the findings MS-Excel was used.

Background:

Kushmandi High School -

Kushmandi High School is a Govt. Sponsored Co-educational Higher Secondary Institution established in 1927 . It is situated at 10A, State Highway, Kushmandi Block under Dakshin Dinajpur District of West Bengal. The School provide education to students from class V-XII. The current student strength of the school is approximately 2751. The distance between the library and the school is approximately 200 metres.

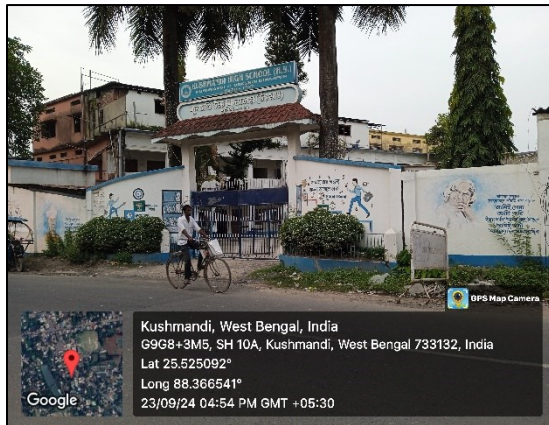
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The library is located at the boundary of the school ground.

Kushmandi Rural Library -

Kushmandi Rural Library is a rural library situated at the corner of the school grounds of Kushmandi High School. It is situated at 2 No. Kushmandi GP, South Dinajpur zila in West Bengal.

library. This collection covers many types of books like textbooks of various classes, story books, reference books, dictionaries, and reference books of various subjects at the graduation level of education, magazines, etc. This huge collection can fulfill the students and teachers of the school in their academic needs. This library has been directly associated with the school and helping the students for a decent number of years now.



The book collection of this library is nearly about 13359 which is huge in the context of this type of

Photo 1 Kushmandi High School



Photo 2 Kushmandi Rural Library & Library Reading room

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Collection development of the library	
Textbooks	1526
Storybooks	7530
Essays	4200
Religious Books	25
Dictionary	10
Magazine	6
Newspapers	2
Other reference books	10
Carrier oriented books	50

Table 1 Kushmandi Rural Library collection at a glance

Patron Categories of Kushmandi Rural Library -

Patron category	No of patron
General	45
Students	112

Table 2 Kushmandi Rural Library patron category at a glance

Staff Categories of Kushmandi Rural Library -

Designation	No of staff
Librarian	1

Table 3 Kushmandi Rural Library staff detail

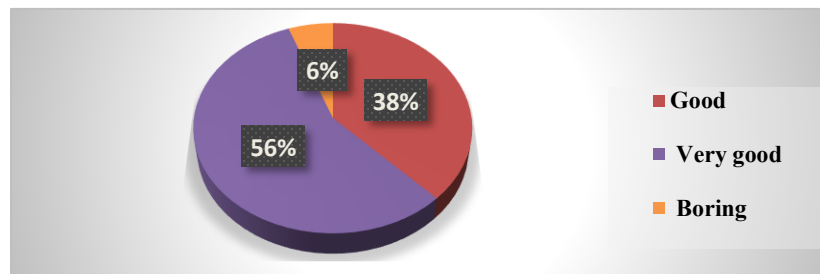


Chart 1 User attitude towards library visit

Findings and discussion:

The study revealed the following results from the responses given by the student-users of the library. The responses were tabulated and analyzed in the following manner.

- **User attitude toward access the rural library as a student of the Kushmandi High School:**

The majority of the students were happily using the library. It was found that 56% respondents were very much interested in accessing the Library.

According to the students' opinion, the library was complimenting the paucity of the school library in their school. There was also a negligible no. of users who were not very interested to access the library.

- **Preferable time to access the library:**

- From the responses it was found that majority of the students preferred to come to the library during their break times. There were some percentage of students also using the library after the school hours to fulfil their academic needs.

Paul, Moutusi. "Effective Partnership between Public Library and School to revamp the Public Library Movement: a case study of Kushmandi Rural Library" *Brainwave: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, Sept. 2024, pp. 816–826.

● **The environment of the library**

To majority of the respondents the library environment was calm which was ideal for reading books. Majority of the respondents

were aware about the collections of the library, though, there were some students who did not know about all the resources available in their library.

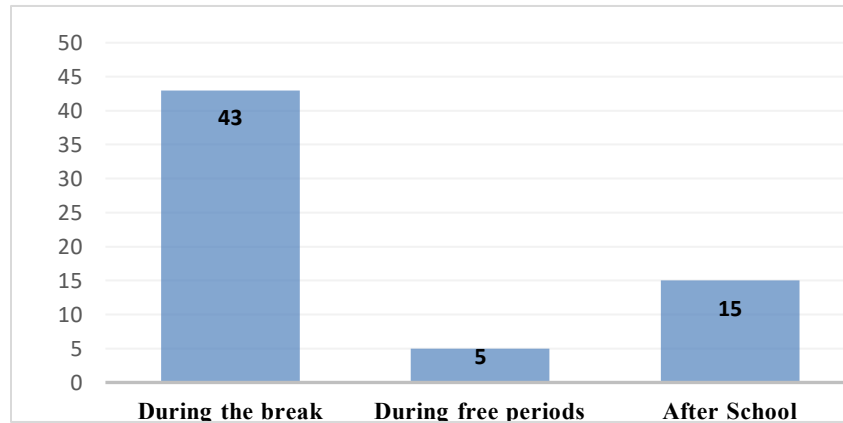


Chart 2 Students’ response about preferred visiting time to library

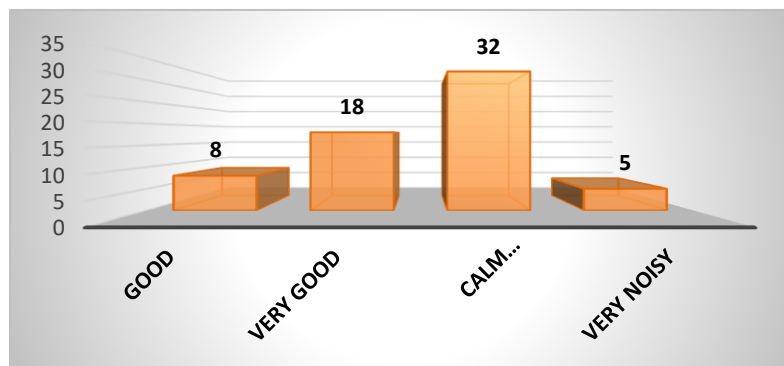


Chart 3 Students’ response about the reading environment of the library

● **Awareness of the collection of the library**

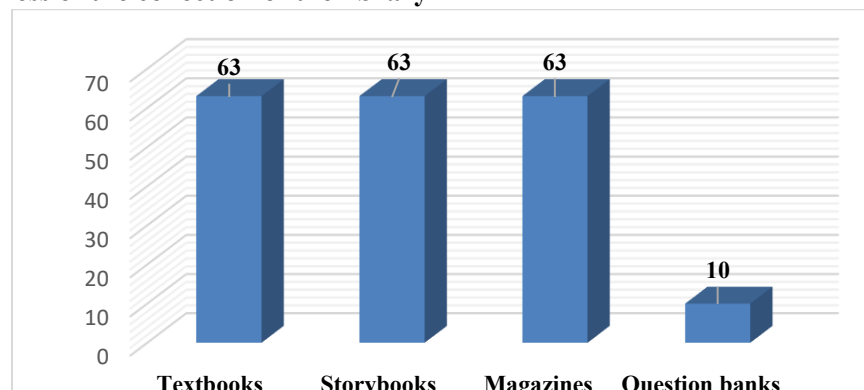


Chart 4 Students’ response about the collection of the library

Paul, Moutusi. "Effective Partnership between Public Library and School to revamp the Public Library Movement: a case study of Kushmandi Rural Library" *Brainwave: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, Sept. 2024, pp. 816–826.

It was also revealed that a good percentage of students were interested in reading fictions in the library. Almost an equal percentage of students were also interested in reading their text books.

Also, students were very much aware that there were two (2) types of newspapers available in the library. The response was collected against the question "Is there a newspaper available in the library?"

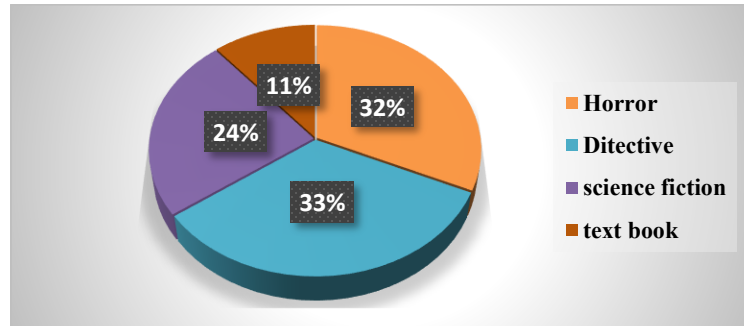


Chart 5 Students' preference for reading various types of books

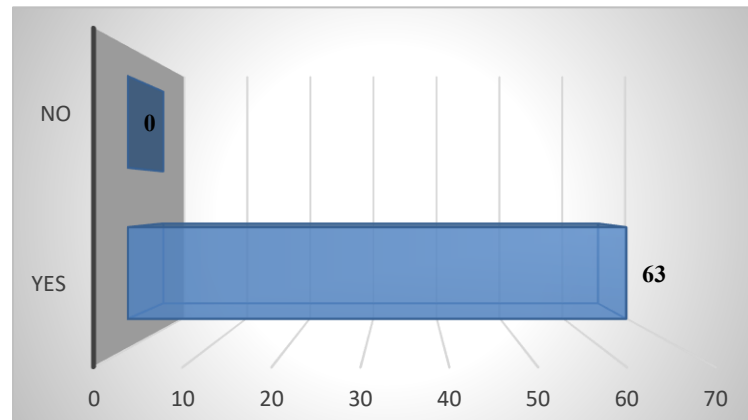


Chart 6 Students' response about the availability of newspapers in the library

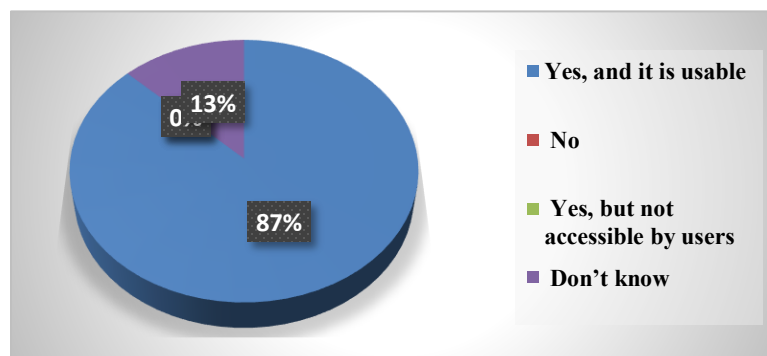


Chart 7 Students' response about the availability of newspapers in the library

Paul, Moutusi. "Effective Partnership between Public Library and School to revamp the Public Library Movement: a case study of Kushmandi Rural Library" *Brainwave: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, Sept. 2024, pp. 816–826.

Majority of these student-users were aware about the availability of dictionary, which is an important tool in their learning process. The student-users were also shared their grievances on non-availability of updated editions of the available textbooks (Chart 8). And in case of availability of computers in the library, students-users said that the computers were there but those were not for their use (Chart 9).

• Services provided by the library

Students were asked whether the library staff members were helpful or not and the responses indicated that library staff members are very professional (Chart 10). Though the access to the printer-copier machine was restricted but the students sometimes got that facility too (Chart 11).

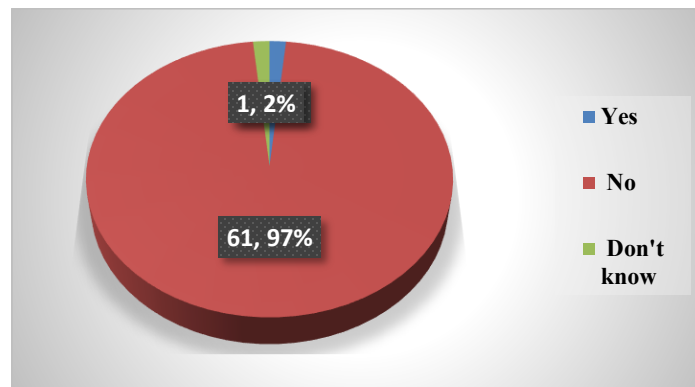


Chart 8 Students' response about the non-availability of updated textbooks

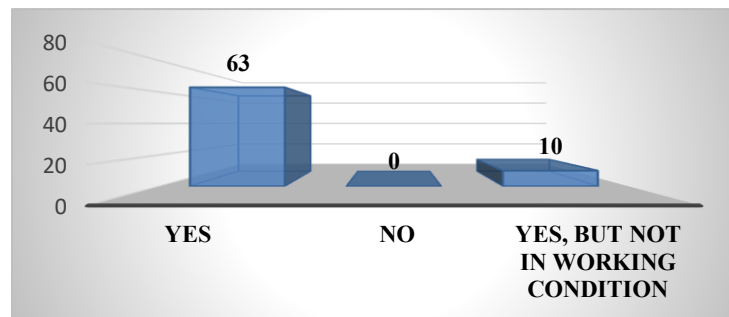


Chart 9 Students' response about using computers in the library

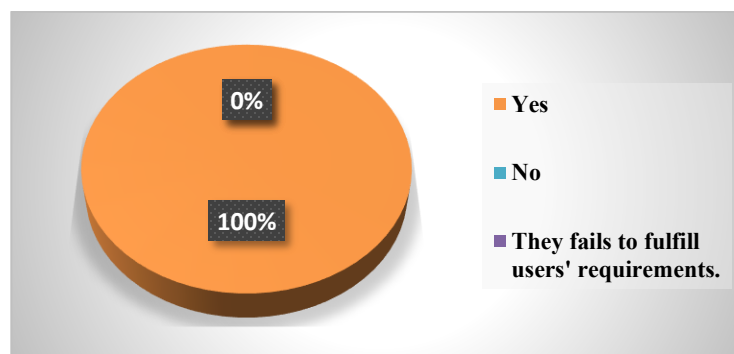


Chart 10 Students' response about library staff behavior towards their requirements

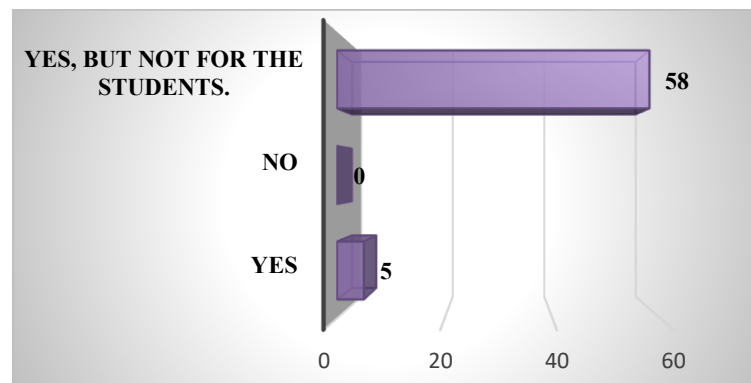


Chart 11 Students' response about using printer and copier in the library

Here is the following summary of information gathered after analyzing the students' responses:

- The library is very much populated in this locality for its huge collection and the students like to come library. The library is compensating the unavailability of the school library in their school. They also stated that the library is fulfilling their academic needs even after their school hours. This reveals that even if there were a library in their school, then the library could have served the students during the school hours only. But this rural library can cater the required services to the students even after the school hours which is eventually fulfilling the academic needs of the students.
- If the facility of computers and printers were given to the students then that would have been an added facility to them.
- The students are using the text books available in the library along with the other fiction and non-fiction books. Text books with updated editions could have been better for them if available.

Conclusion:

The case of Kushmandi Rural Library can be a good example of an effective collaboration of school and public library to offer library services to

the school students not only during the school time but also after the school hours. There are some barriers which can be overcome by framing few solutions.

- Availability of digital utility for the users, updated textbooks, an ergonomically designed reading room etc. For this purpose, funds can be raised by taking the initiative step by the school and local authority.
- If the textbooks have become updated editions students may be interested more to read textbooks. For this purpose, the library should keep in touch with the school authority to get a list of updated books included in the syllabus.
- An ergonomically designed reading room can be arranged which in turn will serve as a group study room for the students.
- The library should organize some extensional activities like a storytelling competition, quiz completion, and special day celebration to attract the students more.
- Teachers should encourage the students about the benefits of using the library not only for their study purposes but also for their leisure time in a fruitful way.
- Initiatives for collaboration between schools and nearby public libraries from the government level should be taken in consultation with the Local Library Authority (LLA). The LLAs also have the responsibility

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to arrange publicity campaign to promote public libraries and its services to the local communities.

Another main barrier to the development of public libraries is the very low Govt. funds. Govt. should increase funds for the rural libraries so it can develop collection by increasing its textbook collection and making digital utilities like computers usable for library members. Successful collaboration between public libraries and schools is key to the development of both of the institutions. A few days ago Tirhankar Ghosh, BDO of Tapan Block, Dakshin Dinajpur initiated a program "Choloboipori" to reduce the use of mobile among the school students of Tapan Block. In this program, students are requested to spend their time in the library instead of using mobile phones. Students can use the library throughout the day. This types of govt. initiatives encourages people and makes them towards the library.

The utility of public library in the knowledge community will never diminish even in this age of digital resources. Common people and, to be very precise, marginal people are still dependent on the public libraries of their area. Public library is play still playing a pivotal role in community information system of far flung areas which cannot be ignored.

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Contributor

Moutusi Paul

Librarian, Kushmandi Rural Library,
Kushmandi, Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal,
India. Email: paul.moutusi.987@gmail.com