

HKBM 7017 Research Principles and Philosophy

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Title of research proposal

Primary Healthcare Reform and Financing Community Pharmacy services in Hong Kong

Research objective

Primary Healthcare Reform and Financing Community Pharmacy services in Hong Kong

Introduction and Problem under investigation

The Hong Kong Government has introduced the 'Primary Healthcare Blueprint' in 2022 to strengthen primary healthcare services, emphasizing prevention, early disease detection, and community-based care. Community Pharmacy service is one of the primary healthcare reform initiatives that the government is committed to promulgate services development, filling service gaps in current underdeveloped primary healthcare system.

Research problem, purpose and research questions

In an attempt to develop research knowledge on community pharmacy services and practice improvements to support reform in primary healthcare in Hong Kong, financing model for these services has far-reaching resources management implications critical to reform success. An efficient and stable financing model that ensure equitable yet easy accessible primary healthcare services is needed.

The purpose of this study research is to inform policy makers on policy implementation through investigation of existing international and local healthcare financing models, development and implementation of a structured financing model as well as to explore the perceptions of stakeholders and practitioners on essential success and failure factors on the effectiveness and sustainability of this proposed funding model in support of the new reform development of Community Pharmacy services initiatives in Hong Kong.

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The three questions that this research study addresses are:

1. What healthcare financing models best supports the changes in primary healthcare services affecting public and private healthcare service providers that stem from the recent development in Primary Healthcare system in Hong Kong?
2. How does this financing model in support of recent development in community pharmacy services affects quality of community pharmacy services to the Hong Kong citizens?
3. What are the factors and implications of the proposed healthcare financing structure to the effectiveness and sustainability of community pharmacy services provision within the context of restructuring of Primary Healthcare services in Hong Kong?

Research Purpose statement

The purpose of this study research is to inform policy makers on policy implementation through investigation of existing international and local healthcare financing models, development and implementation of a structured financing model as well as to explore the perceptions of stakeholders and practitioners on essential success and failure factors in proposing a sustaining and effective funding model for the new development of Community Pharmacy services initiative in Hong Kong.

Broad review of relevant field of studies

In December 2022, HKSAR government has published a Primary Healthcare Blueprint to formulate the direction of development and strategies for strengthening Hong Kong's primary healthcare system to address healthcare challenges in our society on ageing population and the increasing prevalence of chronic disease, with a view to enhancing the overall health and quality of life of Hong Kong citizens (HKSAR, 2022). In the blueprint, the core vision is to transform community pharmacies into accessible primary healthcare nodes within the district-based healthcare system, focusing on chronic disease management supports, disease prevention, and medication safety(HKSAR, 2022). In chapter 5 of the blueprint (page 81-83), community pharmacies role will be expanding in accessibility, primary healthcare services enhancements, and to provide medication management services at the district level for proximal services to public.

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Existing Community pharmacies are mainly focusing retail sales of over-the-counter medicines, health supplements, and personal care products (HKSAR, 2022 p.32) and community pharmacists mainly dispense prescription drugs and provide advice on the use of medicines (SHPHK, 2020). Hong Kong public is also confused about pharmacies supervised by pharmacists and those retailers selling sundries, herbal and non-prescription medicinal products, posing risks to patient safety of undesirable responses (HK Consumer Council, 2015). Recent local researcher from University of Hong Kong has conducted an overview of community pharmacy services in Hong Kong which covers comprehensive views on pharmacists role and service practice scopes in primary healthcare, aligning the practice scopes with Primary Healthcare Blueprint (HKSAR, 2022) as well as proposing new practices development in providing medication services, community vaccination programs, chronic disease management, immunizations and preventative care in health screening services (So, 2024).

Starting in 2024, Hong Kong Jockey Club has provided seeding fund for establishment of community pharmacy services in Hong Kong. The Jockey Club PHARM+ Community Medication Service Network Project has set up 8 community pharmacies in multiple districts to provide medication consultation, advice on chronic diseases and minor ailments, and promote primary health education, and safe use of medication.

With these defined services scopes, how these services can be funded become an integral yet essential aspect to ensure current and expanded services continuity. Based on the search of evidence in local financing models for existing and prospective primary healthcare pharmacy services, little evidence can be found. In Hong Kong, while major funding source for pharmacy services are from government hospitals, all other services not fall under this funding model are paid by individual out-of-pocket with an absence of reimbursement coverage for community pharmacy services (So, 2024).

When searching for financial options for community pharmacy services internationally, researches and information resources found on this topic is enormous. Preliminary review of community pharmacy services financing models from four established countries, UK, Australia, Germany, and US; have been researched as the starting point to examine each model and rationale for funding community pharmacy services. NHS in the UK employs a

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mix of public tax-based and capitation payments models to subsidize pharmacy services (Anderson, 2020) while Australian government provides national health insurance coverage to provide reimbursements to pharmacies for services under universal coverage (Dineen-Griffin, 2020). These models provide cost financing model through broad coverage of pharmacy services at a contained cost. For Germany's financing model, community pharmacy services are funded under social health insurance funds with a mix of public and private insurance models in providing equitable access to pharmacy services (Eickhoff, 2021). US healthcare financing for pharmacy services heavily involved private health insurance with employer-sponsored plans as part of employee benefits and individual private coverage where pharmacies or patients claim reimbursements for pharmacy services utilized. This model provides fast and flexible services though coverage gaps and high costs can be devastating financial burden to citizens (Salgado, 2020).

With the reform in pharmacy services and financing options locally and internationally, key stakeholders engagement is critical to ensure success in restructuring and implementation of new services. Further research in opinions of local practicing community pharmacists on financial feasibility, operational pain points and critical success factors can give policy makers insightful information and feedbacks on managing this transformational change (Abdelouahab, 2021).

Community Pharmacy Funding Models

Statutory / legal and contractual remuneration models are the main financing and funding frameworks for community pharmacy services (Hussain, R., & Babar, Z. U., 2023). Remuneration is based on scope of services offered, costs of services delivery and dispensing fees based on cost estimations from each region. Services reimbursement system is where disparities between countries occurred. According to Hussain & Babar's analysis, there are 3 types of reimbursement system for community pharmacy services around the world: Fee-for-Service (FFS), Capitation, and blended funding model. Fee-for-Service (FFS) model is widely adopted in Australia, Canada, Germany, and Japan. The compensation is solely based on quantity of services provided. Volume of services under this system is a major driver for service provision yet quality of services maybe compromised and potential for overprescribing.

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Capitation reimbursement is based on fixed fee payment per patient with incentivization with quality care regardless of the nature and quantity of services provided. United States, Thailand, and Portugal are using this system. Community pharmacies reimbursing under this system have better cash flows and simplified reimbursement logistics but medications choices may be limited. Blended Funding Model is a mixed model with combination of government and private payer aka insurance funds. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are currently using this system for reimbursement. New Zealand is adding co-payment model to capitation as well as fee-for-service models; which addresses the shortcomings of preexisting payment models. A robust reimbursement model is needed for community pharmacy services in optimizing patient medication management in promoting quality patient care while at the same time provides fair and sustaining community pharmacies compensation.

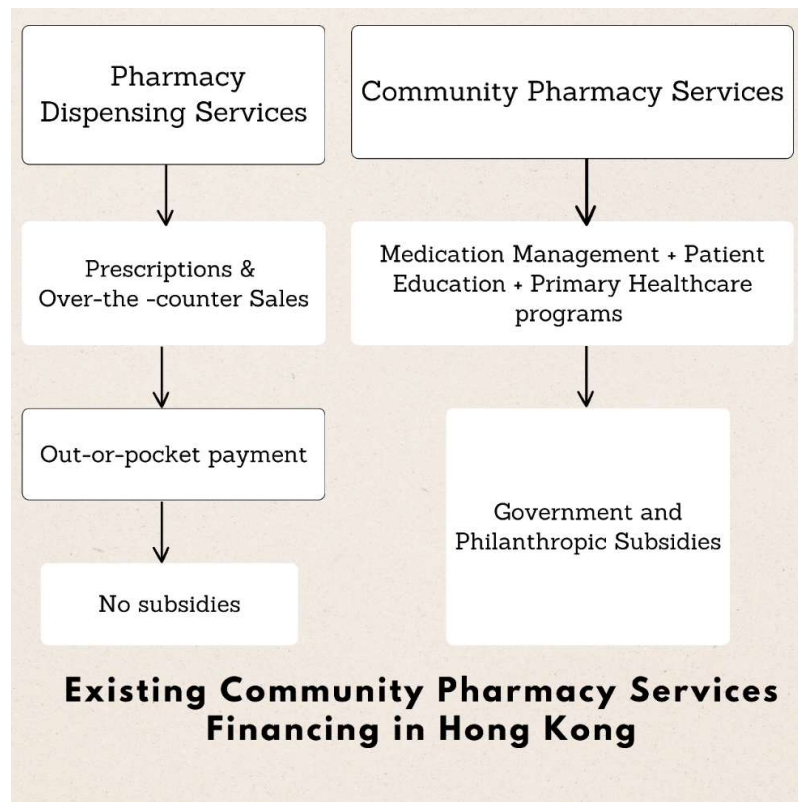
Other funding models include Performance-based incentives, services commissions, and retails and private incomes. According to Harrington, A et al (2021), under performance based incentives, financial motivations are structured around achieving predefined quality, efficiency, and patient care outcomes, which also resemblance similar nature as value-based models. This model is built upon various fields in economics like agency theory, psychology theories like intrinsic and extrinsic motivators; expectancy theory; , organizational theory like ownership, institutional layers, organizational culture, and change management; as well as quality improvement theory in development of this framework.

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Proposed Community Pharmacy Funding Model for Hong Kong

Below is a graphical presentation of existing Community Pharmacy Service funding model in Hong Kong.



Health Policy reform in Hong Kong has recently introduced a new co-payment funding mechanism piloted as Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme in 2023 for 3 years (CDCC, 2023). This is a new funding model as precedent to further development of Primary Healthcare services including Community Pharmacy Services. Thus the proposed funding model for Community Pharmacy Services shall include Co-payment model in addition to Statutory and Contractual Model. This construct coincides with the New Zealand model as described by Hussain, R et.al 2023; thus the conceptual framework development of the blended funding model will be based on this reference point. Exploration for inclusion of performance-based incentives to build into the proposed system will be conducted as this element is also incorporated in the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme (CDCC 2023); which sets the precedent to financing primary healthcare programs through government funding.

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Conceptual Framework of Proposed Community Pharmacy Financing Model

According to Harrington et.al 2021, a robust conceptual framework for developing a community pharmacy financing model integrates economic, organizational, and policy elements to ensure sustainable and equitable access to pharmacy services while incentivizing quality improvement and expanding pharmacist roles beyond product dispensing. This framework consists of 4 domains.

1. Financial Incentives: These are economic motivators and financial rewards that ensure sustainable operations, driving desired behaviours and innovation from the community pharmacies.
2. Community Pharmacy Environment: This refers to operational related factors like ownership, organizational culture, infrastructure, and capacity influence responses to financial incentives.
3. Externalities: These are the external influencing factors, including government health policy, regulatory context, political and economical climate that shape the operational landscape.
4. Performance Measures: This element links financial reimbursement to medication-related quality measures, pharmacy clinical services and outcomes that enable outcome-based payments options that motivate service quality improvements.

Below is a summary of the 4 domains and respective design principles:

Domain	Example Elements	Design Principles
Financial Incentives	Dispensing fees, clinical fee, bonus payments	Economic, behavioural theories
Community Pharmacy Environment	Ownership, culture, infrastructure, capacity	Organizational theory
Externalities	Policy, regulation, economy, market forces	Policy and stakeholder analyses
Performance Measures	Service quality, outcomes, clinical metrics	Implementation Science & performance linkage of payment to health outcomes

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Self-Care Trailblazer's Group (2023) illustrates 4 guiding principles for designing an equitable and perpetual financing model.

- Principle 1: To move toward sustainable domestic financing and blended funding models e.g. mixing tax-based, insurance, private, and out-of-pocket funding mechanisms.
- Principle 2: To prioritize access to care, equity, services quality, and financial risk protection; if possible aligning with financing objectives e.g. Universal Coverage or Utilitarian
- Principle 3: To ensure funding explicitly supports both medication dispensing and professional clinical services, avoiding the cross-subsidization pitfalls seen in current models.
- Principle 4: To incorporate private sector partnerships and innovative reimbursement mechanisms to expand prospective capacity.

Based on these design principles and foundation paradigms, development of the proposed financing model for community pharmacy services shall be inclusive of these elements with focuses on : financial incentives mechanisms with a structured contractual frameworks outlining guaranteed funding, fee-for-services, buying margins, and uplift mechanisms for professional services charges; stakeholder engagement to align these financial incentives with medication safety, patient-centred care, access, equity, environment, competence, and service quality outcomes; most of all, monitoring parameters and regulatory mechanism with adaptation of performance metrics outcomes as the roles and services specifications of community pharmacies evolve and expand over time in prospective.

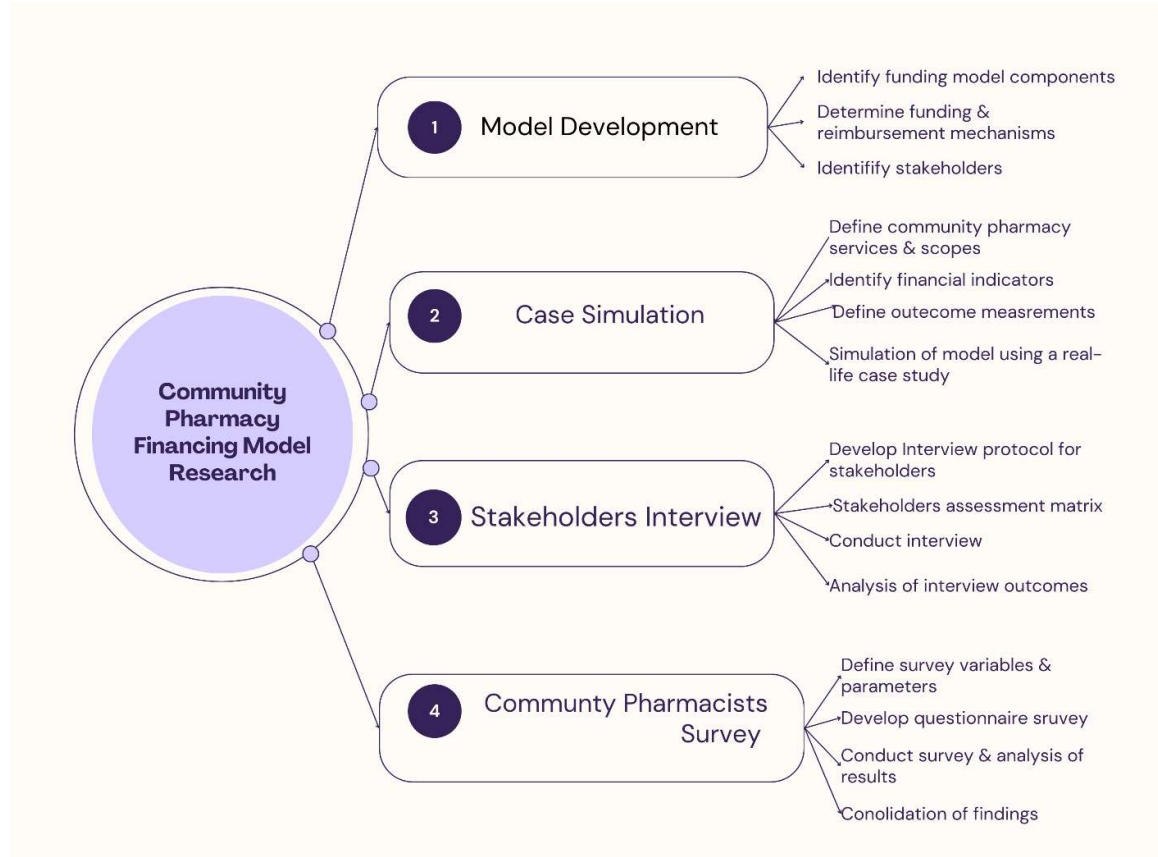
Objectives of this study

Based on the existing financing models references, the objectives of this study are to (1) identify possible financing model suitable for Community Pharmacy services in Hong Kong ; (2) explore the feasibility of implementation of this proposed financing model using a case simulation ; and to 3) identify the challenges and motivational influences including externalities and perceptions of stakeholders and practising community pharmacists on essential success and failure factors for implementation of the proposed financing model for effectiveness and sustainability in the long term.

As community pharmacists being the major stakeholder of primary healthcare provision in the local community, this study adds new knowledge to establishment of a financing and reimbursement framework with real-world practical implications and implementation of the new development in community pharmacy services, providing data and evidence to support these new development initiatives, and contributing to viable primary healthcare policy reform in Hong Kong.

Research Methodologies

Due to the complexity and scope of this research, a mixed methodology approach is adopted. Mixed methods with qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys can provide a holistic view of both financial metrics and respective stakeholder expectations for the proposed community pharmacy financing model development and implementation. Below is a graphical summary of the proposed research methodology framework in achieving the objectives of this study.



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Research methodology of this study consists of 4 parts.

I. Financial Model Development

Initial financial model development involves comprehensive systematic review of existing evidence on financing models for community pharmacy services that align with the philosophical and theoretical construct discussed earlier, integrating the latest policy reform locally in developing new services initiatives for community pharmacy in Hong Kong. Systematic Review is a structured approach to synthesizing evidence from multiple studies, which is also widely used in healthcare research to inform policy and practices (Goodyear-Smith 2019). It is “a review in which bias has been reduced by the systematic identification, appraisal, synthesis, and, if relevant, statistical aggregation of all relevant studies on a specific topic according to a predetermined and explicit method”. PRISMA-P Protocol with an elaborate checklist and guideline will be adopted to develop, conduct, and report systematic review of community pharmacy services financing models internationally and locally. (Shamseer, 2015).

Stakeholder mapping will be conducted through systematic identification and invitation of a broad set of stakeholders namely, community pharmacists, community pharmacy managers, pharmacy professional bodies, insurers, pharmaceutical suppliers, policy makers, hospital administrators, philanthropic funders. Canva, an online tool, will be used to map out all respective stakeholders for further analysis and organization of specific needs with an intuitive editor through this tool.

II. Case Simulation

The proposed community pharmacy financing model will be analysed using a real-life simulation case study at an operating community pharmacy conglomerate with services covering most aspects of community pharmacy services including prescription dispensing, clinical pharmacy services, primary healthcare pharmacy programs, as well as prospective government initiatives to be implemented.

Inspired by Martínez, L.A. et al. (2023), this community pharmacy operation financing simulation involves modelling the financial aspects of running a community pharmacy—including revenue, expenses, remuneration mechanisms, and financial sustainability—using scenario analysis with computational tools to inform strategic decisions and policy. This simulation

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model can help to project the financial impact of investing in automation (robots for dispensing), altering human resource levels, and responding to reimbursement structure reforms based on the proposed financing model.

Financial indicators and parameters for community pharmacy services analysis are based on the research work from Abu Assab M et. Al (2024). The summarized list of the parameters are as follows:

Variables	Performance indicators
Profitability	Profit Margin Gross Profit Margin Return on Asset Return on Equity
Liquidity	Current Ratio Quick Ration
Leverage	Debt Ratio Deb to Equity Ratio
Efficiency	Asset Turnover Inventory Turnover

III. Stakeholder Interview

A qualitative description (QD) study approach is used to present a description and comprehensive summary of the proposed community pharmacy financing model and related implementation issues (Kim H et al. 2017). Stakeholders interview shall be conducted to explore and gaining insights into feasibility for real-world practice, policy direction, and applicability to existing health reform changes.

Invitations will be sent out to identified stakeholders using organizational channels and professional networks to target both internal (pharmacists, managers, pharmacy organizations) and external (non-pharmacy organizations) stakeholders identified.

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With reference to O'Sullivan P, McCarthy S (2022), semi-structured interviews with open-end questions are the norm in conducting stakeholders interviews, enabling exploration of financial and funding perceptions, practice barriers, and enabling factors. An interview topic guide will be developed to guide these interviews which will be conducted until thematic saturation is achieved. All aspects in reporting for this interview study will follow the 32 item check list of the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) statement.

Interview data and thematic analysis will employ the six phase method outlined by Clarke and Braun (2007) as follows:

Using thematic analysis in psychology 87

Table 1 Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

NVivo® will be the qualitative software used for this process for thematic analysis.

IV. Community Pharmacists Survey

For investigation on local practicing pharmacists and stakeholders perceptions and on the effectiveness and sustainability of primary healthcare financing and community pharmacy services, direct recruitment of cohorts of practicing community pharmacists from each 18 districts in Hong Kong working at diverse settings (chain store vs independent community pharmacies) will be recruited to participate in a structured survey with statistical comparison of quantitative data from Likert-type questionnaire, and qualitative thematic analysis of community pharmacists' written responses to open-ended questions related to primary healthcare community pharmacy services including community pharmacy dispensing and clinical services

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provision, primary healthcare programs, existing and prospective financing options, and essential success / improvement factors (GoodYear-Smith, 2019, Chapter 5 and 17) .

Structure of the survey questionnaire shall consist of 4 sections:

- Demographics of participants – gender, age, education, years in community pharmacy practice, pharmacy ownership status, districts.
- Perceptions on proposed financing model and new community pharmacy services initiatives - awareness, involvement, attitudes toward existing/proposed models, feasibility.
- Model Implementation - barriers, facilitators, experience with new financing systems, documentation and billing struggles, anticipated operational issues.
- Model Effectiveness - perceived impact on patient care/service quality, financial outcomes, workload, efficiency.
- Financial Sustainability - long-term financial viability, adaptability, stakeholder buy-in

The survey questionnaire will be reviewed by experts in pharmacy management and healthcare financing to ensure items constructs are relevant and clear. Pre-test the questionnaire with a small group to pilot the survey for initial feedback, and revision if needed for clarity and validity check before conducting the actual survey.

Online survey platforms (e.g., Google Forms, SoJump) will be adapted for quick and efficient distribution of the questionnaire and ease of filling in the information. The survey will be supplemented with in-person interviews for more in depth investigations if desirable.

Ethical approval from designated institution from University of Wales Trinity Saint David shall be seek before data collection. All participants shall be kept anonymous with informed consent to voluntary participation.

Description statistics of quantitative responses will be performed with SPSS© and thematic analysis conducted with qualitative open-ended responses data.

Application of Research Onion in this Community Pharmacy Financing Model Research

According to Saunders et al (2019), the research onion guides researchers from broad philosophical positions like positivism or interpretivism, down to concrete data collection techniques like interviews & surveys. Applying the research onion to this study context means methodically working through its six layers—philosophy, approach, strategy, methodological choice, time horizon, and data collection—tailoring each to best investigate issues of community pharmacy services financing, sustainability, and effectiveness.

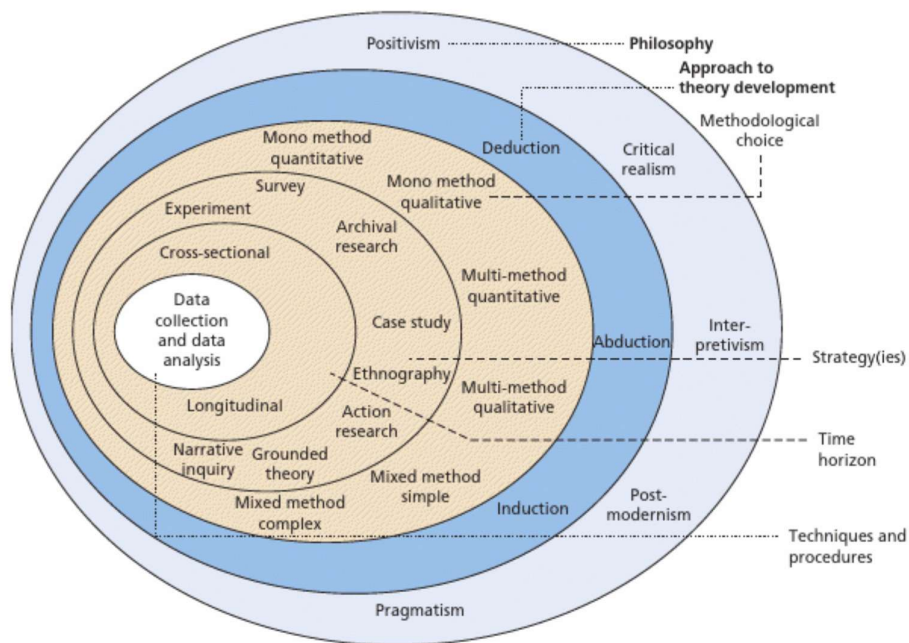


Figure 4.1 The research 'onion'
Source: © 2015 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill

Saunders, M, Lewis, P, & Thornhill, A 2015, Research Methods for Business Students PDF EBook, Pearson Education.

Philosophy: This studies adopts a pragmatist, interpretivist philosophy, allowing for both qualitative and quantitative exploration of pharmacists' perceptions and policy impacts of the changes in financing options and reimbursement mechanisms.

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Approach to model development: Both inductive approach, building theory from data, and deductive approach, testing existing and proposed new frameworks, are both adopted in this study.

Methodological Choices: This study employs a mixed method approach to gather broad financial, operational, and experiential data from all levels stakeholders, professional leaders, policy makers, community pharmacy practitioners, and philanthropic funders. This mixed method approach can also assess how pharmacists use financial indicators—liquidity, profitability, leverage, and operational efficiency—to manage and sustain their businesses, linking economic realities to broader service and societal roles.

Strategy: Common strategies include cross-sectional surveys, semi-structured interviews, and case simulation study are all employed to explore and understand how current and proposed financing models affect community pharmacy operational sustainability and service delivery as well as community pharmacists' experiences with changing payment models and their impacts on daily practice, service diversification, and the need for policy changes.

Time Horizon: Due to the time limitation of this study, cross-sectional time horizon is adapted in this study.

Techniques and Procedures: In this study, data collection methods include interviews, financial indicator tracking, and thematic analysis of qualitative responses are employed. Computational software like Nvivo®, SPSS®, Canva® will also be used for data analysis.

Reflection on Research Approach of this study

This research study adopts a pragmatic paradigm in research, a philosophical and methodological approach that emphasized practicality, real-world application, and the integration of theory and practice (Amila N.K.K. Gamage (2025) in addressing real-world problems, making a positive impact in our society.

In recognition of research questions demand both objective measurement and in-depth interpretation, by integrating positivist and interpretivist methodologies in this study, the response to complex disciplinary challenges can be achieved in ways that a single-paradigm approach cannot. Using the research onion model allows clarity and alignment between my research questions, methodologies adopted, and desired outcomes measurements. With this systematic approach to explore the financial,

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operational, and policy-related dimensions of community pharmacy services development under the latest primary healthcare reform. Such research framework provides high confidence and significant findings that are credible, comprehensive, applicable, with good validity to support further discussions in policy directions and practice development.

For my research in community pharmacy financing model, adopting the research onion structure shaped by the latest philosophical and methodological advances, this robust study design with new approaches to model development, case simulation, stakeholders interviews, comprehensive views from practitioners, and strong coherent reasoning from philosophical position to concrete data analysis; is at the frontier of community pharmacy practice, adding new form for knowledge production with evidence to support policy makers and funders to expand quality community pharmacy services to Hong Kong public with sustainability.

Potential Limitations

Workforce and resource constraints from manpower shortages, increased workloads due to complex mechanisms, and insufficient resources to hire and train staff may limit both implementation and study validity when evaluating new financing models.

Limited integration and collaboration due to existing funding structures may inhibit integration with respective stakeholders, restricting the examination of true clinical and economic impact within broader health systems integration.

Quality vs. Quantity Metrics for community pharmacy services are yet to define and existing funding models mainly focus on rewarding through volume (e.g., number of items dispensed) rather than quality of services. This emphasis complicates meaningful outcome or sustainability measurements.

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Areas for Further Research

Financial Sustainability Metrics: further studies should develop and validate financial indicators specific to community pharmacies services, including profitability, liquidity, solvency, and operational efficiency, and link these to service outcomes and quality levels.

Long-Term Comparative Studies: longitudinal studies should be conducted in comparing different remuneration structures (e.g., fee-for-service, capitation, value-based, blended) in terms of financial viability, patient outcomes, and overall healthcare costs to our society.

Workforce Solutions: investigate human resources management models that address workforce development, resource allocation, and training as integral to sustainable service provision and financing.

AI / Digital Tools and Data Analytics: assess how digital health innovations and data analytics can empower community pharmacists to make financially informed decisions and optimize operational efficiencies without compromising quality patient services.

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GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS IN THE COMPLETION OF TASKS

NOTE: The guidance offered below is linked to the five generic assessment criteria overleaf.

1. Engagement with Literature Skills

Your work must be informed and supported by scholarly material that is *relevant* to and *focused* on the task(s) set; you should make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources, as appropriate (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline). You should provide evidence that you have accessed a wide *range* of sources, which may be academic, governmental and industrial; these sources may include academic journal articles, textbooks, current news articles, organisational documents, and websites. You should consider the *credibility* of your sources; academic journals are normally highly credible sources while websites require careful consideration/selection and should be used sparingly. Any sources you use should be current and up-to-date, mostly published within the last five years or so, though seminal/important works in the field may be older. You must provide *evidence* of your research/own reading throughout your work, using correctly a suitable referencing system, including in-text citations in the main body of your work and a reference list at the end of your work.

Guidance specific to this assessment: Students should be referenced using the Harvard referencing style, with one combined list of references at the end of the document. At least 50 credible and relevant sources should be cited across the Report, including all its three parts: 1. Abstract, 2. Literature Review, and 3. Annotated Bibliography.

2. Knowledge and Understanding Skills

At level 7, you should be able to demonstrate a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of your academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice, with a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to your own research or advanced scholarship. Your work must demonstrate your growing mastery of these concepts, principles, current challenges, innovation and insights associated with the subject area. *Knowledge* relates to the facts, information and skills you have acquired through your learning. You demonstrate your *understanding* by interpreting the meaning of the facts and information (knowledge). This means that you need to select and include in your work the contemporary concepts, techniques, models, theories, etc. appropriate to the task(s) set. You should be able to explain the theories, concepts, etc. meaningfully to show your understanding. Your mark/grade will also depend upon the *extent* to which you demonstrate your knowledge and understanding; ideally each should be complete and detailed, with comprehensive coverage.

Guidance specific to this assessment: Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding as stated in the learning outcomes of the Module and specified in the Generic Assessment Criteria on p. 8–12.

3. Cognitive and Intellectual Skills

You should be able to: evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses; deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively to make sound judgements in the absence of complete data. Your work must contain evidence of logical, analytical thinking, evaluation and synthesis. For example, to examine and break information down into parts, make inferences, compile, compare and contrast information. This means not just describing what! But also justifying: Why? How? When? Who? Where? At what cost? At all times, you must provide justification for your arguments and judgements. Evidence that you have reflected upon the ideas of

1. Practical Skills

At level 7, you should be able to demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline. This includes acting autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level, originality in tackling and solving problems, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts or situations.

You should be able to demonstrate mastery of the leading edge subject-related concepts and ideas as they relate to real world situations and/or particular contexts. How do they work in practice? You will deploy models, methods, techniques, and/or theories, in those contexts or circumstances, to assess current situations, perhaps to formulate plans or plausible, justifiable recommendations to solve problems, or to propose new models, or to create artefacts, which may be innovative and creative, thereby demonstrating your understanding of how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research and/or application. This is likely to involve, for instance, the use of real world artefacts, examples and cases, the application of a model within an organisation and/or benchmarking one theory or organisation against others.

Guidance specific to this assessment: Students should demonstrate their skills to identify and analyse suitable and relevant literature review sources and use appropriate Harvard referencing style throughout the Report.

2. Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice

Your work must provide evidence of the qualities and transferable skills necessary for postgraduate-level employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments. This includes demonstrating: the independent learning ability for continuing professional development to advance existing skills and acquire new competences of a professional nature that will enable you to assume significant responsibility within organisations; that you can initiate and complete tasks, projects and procedures, whether individually and/or collaboratively, to a professional level; that you can use appropriate media to effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms for a variety of audiences; fluency of expression; clarity and effectiveness in presentation and organisation. Work should be coherent and well-structured in presentation and organisation.

Guidance specific to this assessment: The three parts of the Report should be combined into one document written in UK English in an appropriate business/academic style. The final report should be one single document with a title page and its three parts clearly labelled.

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GENERIC ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Level 7

In accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, at the end of Level 7 students should be able to demonstrate: a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice; a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship; originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline; conceptual understanding that enables the student to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences. They will demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level to continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level. They the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility; decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations/professional environments; and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Level 7	FAIL	FAIL	MARGINAL FAIL	SATISFACTORY (Pass)	GOOD to VERY GOOD (Merit)	EXCELLENT (Distinction)	EXCEPTIONAL (Distinction)
Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
Engagement with literature (including current research, referencing, academic conventions and	Little or no evidence of reading and/or reliance on inappropriate sources. Views and findings mostly	Poor engagement with essential reading. No evidence of wider reading. Reliance on inappropriate	Engagement with a very limited range of relevant and credible sources. Some omissions and minor errors.	Engagement with an appropriate range of research-informed literature, including	Engagement with a wide range of research-informed literature, including sources	Engagement with an extensive range of relevant and credible literature, informed by the latest research.	Exceptional engagement with an extensive range of relevant and credible literature, informed by the

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Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
academic honesty)	unsupported and non-authoritative. Referencing conventions used incoherently or largely absent.	sources, and/or indiscriminate use of sources. Heavily reliant on information gained through class contact. Inconsistent and weak use of referencing.	Referencing conventions evident though not always applied accurately or consistently.	sources retrieved independently. Some over-reliance on texts. Referencing may show minor inaccuracies or inconsistencies.	retrieved independently. Selection of relevant and credible sources. Very good use of referencing, with no/very few inaccuracies or inconsistencies.	Consistently accurate application of referencing.	latest research. High-level referencing skills consistently and professionally applied.
Knowledge and understanding (A systematic, conceptual understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the discipline; a comprehensive understanding of techniques	Major gaps in knowledge and understanding of the subject matter is not systematic. Substantial inaccuracies. No awareness of current problems, insights or the latest research and/or advanced scholarship within the discipline.	Gaps in knowledge, with only superficial systematic understanding. Some significant inaccuracies and/or irrelevant material. No critical awareness of current problems, insights, or latest research within the discipline.	Limited knowledge and systematic understanding of the concepts and principles within the subject area, which to some marginal extent, is informed by current research and scholarship. Some critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, but	Knowledge is accurate and reasonably detailed. A systematic understanding of the field of study informed by, to some extent, current research and scholarship. A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights though this may be	Knowledge has a well-defined focus, which is reasonably extensive, coherent and detailed, with a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights. Exhibits good understanding of the breadth and depth of contemporary and established	Excellent mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge. A systematic, excellent understanding of the concepts of the subject informed by current research and scholarship. Highly critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights. A	Exceptional mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge. An exceptionally critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights. An outstanding understanding of the concepts of the subject, well-informed by current research and scholarship.

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Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
applicable to their own research)			often under-developed.	under-developed occasionally.	views, and the work is, at least in part, well-informed by current research and scholarship.	critical, awareness of how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research.	A critical, sophisticated and nuanced awareness of how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research.
Cognitive and intellectual skills (Critical evaluation of current research and methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses; make sound judgements in the absence of complete data.)	Wholly or almost wholly descriptive work. Little or no evaluation or critique or attempt at a systematic approach. Failure to develop arguments, leading to illogical or invalid judgements. Unsubstantiated generalisations,	Largely descriptive work, with superficial use of critical evaluation of research and methodologies. Absent or weak development of hypotheses and judgements. Information accepted uncritically, uses generalised statements made with scant	Limited attempt at critical evaluation/ critique of current research and methodologies, tending towards description. Limited attempt to propose new hypotheses. Can deal with complex issues but not systematically or creatively. Some	Some critical evaluation/ critique of current research and methodologies, though slightly underdeveloped in places, Proposes adequate but limited new hypotheses, where relevant. Can deal with complex issues but not fully	Sound critical evaluation/ critique of current research and methodologies, Proposes new hypotheses, where appropriate. Can deal with complex issues systematically and with some creativity. Ability to make sound judgements	Excellent critical evaluation/ critique of current research and methodologies, Proposes innovative hypotheses, where appropriate. Can synthesise complex issues systematically and creatively. Ability to investigate	Exceptional critical evaluation/ critique of current research and methodologies, Proposes innovative hypotheses, where appropriate. Exemplary systematic and creative synthesis of complex issues.

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Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
	made without use of credible evidence.	evidence and unsubstantiated opinions. Ideas sometimes illogical and contradictory.	evidence to support emerging judgements but these may be underdeveloped or with a little inconsistency / mis-interpretation. May assert rather than argue a case.	systematically or creatively. Ability to make judgements based on data (that may be incomplete) but with some tendency to assert/state opinion rather than argue on the basis of reason and evidence.	based on data (that may be incomplete)	contradictory or incomplete information and make strong, persuasive, arguments and sophisticated judgements.	Ability to investigate contradictory or incomplete information and make strong, persuasive, arguments and sophisticated, nuanced, judgements. Potential for journal publication or doctoral research.
Practical skills (Originality / creativity in the application of knowledge, tools and techniques and in tackling and solving problems in complex and unpredictable professional situations;	Limited or no use of methods, materials, tools and/or techniques. Little or no appreciation of the context of the application. Limited understanding of the application of	Rudimentary application of methods, materials, tools and/or techniques but without consideration and competence. Flawed appreciation of	An awareness and mostly appropriate application of well-established methods, materials, tools and/or techniques, with occasional errors.	An appropriate application of standard methods, materials, tools and/or techniques. Clear appreciation of the context of the application. Mainly	A very good application of a range of methods, materials, tools and/or techniques. Very good consideration of the context of the application, with perceptive	An advanced application of knowledge, methods, materials, tools and/or techniques. The context of the application is well considered, and insightful.	Exceptional application skills in complex, unpredictable, contexts, drawing skilfully on the latest research within the discipline. Can identify complex problems and

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Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
practical use of established techniques of research and enquiry to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.)	theory to practice or making appropriate links between the two. Very weak problem-solving skills in complex and unpredictable contexts.	the context of the application. Weak understanding of the application of theory to practice, with only occasional evidence of making appropriate links between the two. Weak problem-solving skills in complex and unpredictable contexts.	Basic appreciation of the context of the application. Theoretical knowledge and understanding applied in practice, but not always making logical links between the two. Can identify problems and propose basic solutions without fully appreciating the complexity of unpredictable contexts.	consistent, accurate and logical application of theory to practice, making appropriate links between the two. Can identify problems and propose mostly appropriate solutions in complex and unpredictable contexts, with elements of originality.	insights. Can identify problems and propose appropriate solutions in complex and unpredictable contexts. Evidence of originality and creativity.	Can identify complex problems and propose excellent solutions. An excellent grasp of techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship. Shows originality in application of knowledge and techniques, and of how established techniques of enquiry create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.	propose sophisticated, original solutions. An outstanding application of techniques applicable to own research or advanced scholarship. Shows originality in application of knowledge and techniques, and of how established techniques of enquiry create and interpret knowledge in the discipline with assimilation and development of cutting edge processes and techniques.

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Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
Transferable skills for life and professional practice (Exercise of self-direction, autonomy and personal responsibility; plan and implement tasks at a professional level; independent learning; use appropriate media to communicate effectively and professionally to a variety of audiences; fluency of expression; systematic approach; clarity and effectiveness in presentation and organisation.)	Communication medium is inappropriate or misapplied. Work is poorly structured, disorganised and/or confusingly expressed. Very weak use of language and/or very inappropriate style. Little or no evidence of autonomy (or collaboration, where relevant) in the completion of tasks. Little or no evidence of the skills required in professional, postgraduate employment.	Communication medium is poorly designed and/or not suitable for the audience. Work is poorly presented in a disjointed manner. It is loosely, and at times incoherently, structured, with information and ideas often poorly expressed. Weak use of language and/or inappropriate style. Weak independent initiative (or collaboration, if relevant). Limited evidence of the skills required in	Can communicate in a suitable medium but with some room for improvement. Mostly ordered presentation and structure in which relevant ideas / concepts are reasonably expressed. Work may lack coherence in places. Can work as part of a team, but with limited involvement in group activities. Demonstrates some but not all of the basic skills required in professional, postgraduate employment,	Can communicate effectively in a suitable format, but may have minor errors. Mostly coherent, organised work, in a suitable structure and is for the most part clearly expressed. Can work effectively independently and/or as part of a team, with clear contribution to group activities. Demonstrates the skills required in professional, postgraduate employment, with some areas of strength and	Can communicate well, confidently and consistently in a suitable format. Work is coherent, fluent, well-structured and organised. Can work very well autonomously and/or as part of a team, with a good contribution to group activities. Demonstrates comprehensive professional, postgraduate employment skills.	Can communicate professionally confidently and consistently in a suitable format. Work is coherent, very fluent and is presented professionally. Can work autonomously with initiative. Where relevant can work professionally within a team, showing leadership skills as appropriate, managing conflict and meeting obligations. Demonstrates excellent professional,	Can communicate with an exceptionally high level of professionalism. Work is remarkably coherent, very fluent and is presented professionally. Can work outstandingly well and professionally within a team, showing advanced leadership skills. Demonstrates exemplary professional, postgraduate employment skills and a strong appetite

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Category	0-29%	30-44%	45-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-84%	85-100%
		professional, postgraduate employment.	with some areas of minor weakness.	some of minor weakness.		postgraduate employment skills and a strong appetite for further development.	for further development.