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Editorial

It is with a deep sense of academic engagement and pedagogic commitment that we present this second issue of the B.Ed. Teacher Education Journal, *Peritia*, 2026. This volume brings together a thoughtfully curated collection of research papers authored by B.Ed. trainees in close academic collaboration with their supervisors. The co-authorship model reflected in these contributions underscores a dialogic and mentored approach to knowledge creation, integral to contemporary teacher education

The contributors to this issue, along with their respective studies, are presented below:

Adrija Ghosh Dastidar and Dr. Rupa Ghosh, "A Study on Start-ups in the Generation of Employment in India", examines the role of start-ups as catalysts for employment generation within India's evolving economic landscape. It situates entrepreneurial growth within educational discourse, urging educators to align learning with employability and innovation. Ankana Roy, Garima Tripathi, Anjali Shaw and Dr. Rupa Ghosh, "Gender and Cult in Kumartuli: The Changing Dynamics of Idol Making in Kolkata", explores gendered participation in traditional artisanal spaces, highlighting shifts in women's roles within Kumartuli's cultural economy. It foregrounds how pedagogy can engage with lived cultural transformations. Bidisha Dutta and Dr. Sanghita Sanyal, "Inclusion of Gender Studies as a Discipline in the School Curriculum", advocates for the systematic inclusion of gender studies in school curricula to foster critical awareness and equity. It positions curriculum reform as a foundational step toward inclusive education. Ramsha Habib and Dr. Sanghita Sanyal, "Dalit Studies in Contemporary Education: A Tool for Social Awareness and Inclusion", emphasizes the importance of integrating Dalit perspectives into educational frameworks. It calls for pedagogies that are socially responsive and rooted in justice, representation and inclusion. Renita Nath and Dr. Kaustuva Banerjee, "Relevance of Experiential Learning in School and Higher Education", highlights experiential learning as a transformative pedagogical approach that deepens engagement and understanding. It argues for a shift toward reflective and practice-based teaching methodologies. Sanandita Dey and Dr. Suparna Ghosh, "Women in Leadership: Breaking the Barriers from Andarmahal to Public Leadership Roles", traces the journey of women's leadership across private and public domains, identifying structural barriers and emerging opportunities. It underscores the role of education in fostering leadership consciousness. Shaheli Das and Dr. Suparna Ghosh, "The Burden of Blame on Women: A Gendered Gaze into Fertility", critically examines the socio-cultural stigmatization of women in matters of fertility through case studies. It calls for sensitized pedagogical approaches that address gendered biases and emotional well-being. Shilpa Gayen and Dr. Kaustuva Banerjee, "Analysis of Media Consumption Pattern to Determine Students' Knowledge Sharing and Media Literacy: A Case Study of College Students", investigates how media engagement shapes knowledge practices among students. It highlights media literacy as an essential pedagogical priority in contemporary education. Shreosi Goswami and Dr. Sanghita Sanyal, "Marginalized Characters of Shakespeare", reinterprets Shakespearean texts through the lens of marginality, drawing attention to silenced voices. It reinforces the importance of critical literary pedagogy in teacher education. Srinjana Roy and Dr. Ranjita Dawn, "Constructing Classroom Disability in Children's Fiction: A Critical Discourse Analysis of R. J. Palacio's *Wonder*", explores representations of disability in children's literature and their pedagogical implications. It emphasizes inclusive classroom narratives that cultivate empathy and understanding. Steffi Burns and Dr. Suparna Ghosh, "Music and Body Image", examines the relationship between musical engagement and body image, highlighting music's role in shaping self-perception and emotional well-being. It further proposes the pedagogical integration of music within undergraduate curricula as a means to foster holistic development, creativity, and embodied learning.



Visakha Banerjee and Dr. Rupa Ghosh, “Status of Women in Predominantly Matrilineal and Patriarchal States in India with Respect to Literacy and Employment”, provides a comparative analysis of women’s status across differing socio-cultural systems. It challenges simplistic binaries and invites nuanced pedagogical discussions on gender and development. Zaynab Rahi and Dr. Ranjita Dawn, “The Impact of Gender on Educational Attainment and Classroom Involvement”, analyses gender-based differences in participation and achievement within educational settings. It calls for inclusive and equitable classroom strategies.

Collectively, these thirteen papers offer a significant contribution to the field of teacher education. They demonstrate a clear shift toward positioning teacher trainees as reflective practitioners and knowledge producers who engage critically with contemporary social realities. The thematic concerns—gender justice, inclusion, experiential learning, media literacy, cultural analysis, and holistic well-being—are not peripheral but central to the redefinition of education in the 21st century.

The impact of these studies on teacher education is both conceptual and practical. Conceptually, they expand the epistemic scope of teacher education by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives and critical frameworks. Practically, they provide actionable insights into classroom strategies, curriculum design, and learner engagement. The emphasis on inclusion, sensitivity, and critical awareness aligns closely with national and global educational priorities, including the call for equitable and holistic education.

This volume, therefore, stands as both a reflection of and a contribution to the dynamic field of teacher education. It affirms that research at the trainee level, when guided with rigor and care, can generate insights of substantial academic and pedagogical value.

The editorial board extends its appreciation to all the authors and co-authors for their dedicated scholarship and collaborative spirit. We solemnly acknowledge the cooperation and support of our Teacher-In- Charge, Sr. Dr. A. Nirmala towards the publication of the volume. We remain really thankful to all the peer reviewers for their time, insightful comments and constructive feedback. We extend our sincere thanks to the faculty members for their guidance, encouragement and thoughtful critique. We are grateful to the library staff of Loreto College for their prompt assistance and for facilitating access to essential resources. We thank our students for their enthusiasm, engagement and contributions. We convey our thanks to the editors for their patience, assistance and constructive input. It is hoped that this compilation will inspire continued inquiry, innovation, and commitment to transformative education.

– Editorial Board



A Study on Start-Ups in the Generation of Employment in India

Adrija Ghosh Dastidar, Dr. Rupa Ghosh

Abstract

Generating employment is at the heart of India's economic and social advancement. The rise of start-ups in the past few years has been a major factor in creating jobs, innovations, and achieving the goal of inclusive growth. Targeted government support has overhauled India's commercial landscape, establishing the country as the third-largest incubator for innovation in the world. This study analyses the contribution of start-ups in the creation of jobs. Based on secondary research of government and institutional reports from 2015 to 2025, this paper discusses the growth of the start-up ecosystem and calls for integrating skill-oriented pedagogy to equip the youth for entrepreneurial engagement. The findings indicate that start-ups have generated over 1.6 million direct jobs across sectors, with significant employment growth in Information Technology, Financial Technology, Education Technology, healthcare, and rural enterprise initiatives, highlighting their pivotal role in bridging the employment gap and driving inclusive economic development.

Keywords: Start-ups, Job Creation, Entrepreneurship, Skill-based Learning, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Innovation, Vocational Training.

Introduction

The health of the Indian economy and the fairness of its society depend heavily on its ability to put people to work. With a booming population of young workers, the country faces a critical mission to transform that human potential into actual, high-quality job opportunities. The start-up phenomenon, which is supported by up-to-date government policies like Start-up India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and Make in India, has been the main driver of employment through innovation.

Startups serve as central nodes for discovery, reshaping the world by injecting original technology and proprietary ideas into the economy. By creating multifaceted employment and driving regional investment, they fortify metropolitan resilience, a phenomenon best illustrated by Bangalore's dramatic transformation into a global tech hub. Besides that, a policy like the NEP 2020 is also there to support this kind of entrepreneurial growth by focusing on creativity, critical thinking, and innovation in the learners.

Need of the Study

- To analyse the role of start-ups in generating employment in India.
- To investigate the possibility of skill-based and vocational training implementation in the school curriculum for the promotion of entrepreneurial growth and the creation of start-up ecosystem.

Review of Literature:

According to the literature, an indication is given of the positive impact of start-ups on economic development through a correlated increase in entrepreneurial activity and resultant improvement in GDP



growth. Fresh business ventures act as catalysts for growth. They shake up the status quo with new inventions, which ultimately makes the broader economy more efficient and much harder to beat (Acs et al., 2009).

Records from a MyGov piece reveal that India's startup count soared to above 60,000 from under 500 within five years, spanning 55 unique fields. By 2021, patent approvals hit 28,000 versus 4,000 during 2013-14, and trademark filings reached 2.5 lakh in 2020-21 against 70,000 previously. As of July 2021, the DPIIT officially acknowledged 52,732 homegrown new ventures.

Despite the pandemic causing widespread unemployment, new ventures stayed a vital lifeline, while state support through the "Vocal for Local" campaign offered essential momentum. This initiative galvanized young workers, instilling the confidence to pursue any viable role because they felt secure knowing the Startup India framework existed to guide their journey through that difficult period

Lately, the national mindset has pivoted dramatically toward building businesses. Traditionally, Indian workers pursued secure civil service roles or jobs at established corporations. However, a new trend toward self-employment has surfaced, fueled by the rise of high-achieving ventures and robust state assistance. This transition highlights a fundamental change in how the modern workforce perceives professional success and risk. (Baluku, et al. 2016)

In the startup ecosystem in India, there are different sectors that exhibit diverse scopes for job creation. Although information technology and software have traditionally been the frontrunners in terms of employment, there are emerging trends in fintech, edtech, healthtech, and digital commerce that show great potential for significant employment generation. In line with a study by KPMG in 2021, the finance subsector is anticipated to generate over 1.5 million jobs by 2025. Moreover, due to the necessity for online learning brought about by the coronavirus outbreak, there is a recruitment surge in the sector of educational technology.

It is now imperative to have support centers like *incubators and accelerators*, and development initiatives that play an important role in the development of new firms. Support centers provide invaluable support services to start-ups in terms of mentoring, business links, and even capital. According to the findings by Ghosh and Roy (2020), businesses that engage with the initiatives have better durability and high chances of success. The centres give importance to nurturing leadership capabilities and efficiency, which can ensure the success and growth of the businesses for years to come. Their contribution towards ensuring the conducive environment cannot be undermined since they help convert ideas into products, thus increasing the need for labour.

According to DPIIT (2020), over 41,000 businesses were recognized as part of the 2016 Startup India initiative until late 2020, creating more than 470,000 jobs. The role of government intervention cannot be understated since it helps remove red tape and provides financial assistance to new businesses, which can then grow and offer employment opportunities.

Methodology:

The study uses secondary data gathered from various sources, which include government reports such as those from DPIIT, NITI Aayog, and the Economic Survey.

Additionally, academic research journals and databases have been consulted to provide a solid foundation for the analysis.



Industry publications, including insights from KPMG and the World Economic Forum, contribute valuable perspectives on the subject matter.

Media sources like The Economic Times, India Today, and the Times of India have also been referenced to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape.

The analysis covers a time frame from 2015 to 2025.

Results and Discussion:

In the past few years, since 2015, the government has tried its best to encourage new business ventures, which has led to many job creation opportunities. According to Niti Aayog (2018), this move has been aimed at helping more individuals set up their own enterprises rather than seeking jobs. As a majority of people in India – around 65% – fall below the age bracket of 35, and considering the hundreds of schools and colleges present throughout the country, it becomes easy to understand how many youths are waiting to join the workforce.

India consists of over 600,000 villages. It is essential to establish both physical and electronic networks in order to progress such areas in India. India needs modern cities along with several advanced cities in order to act as bustling centres of professional help, innovation, and employment. Smart utility management, transportation, energy systems, and housing projects provide huge areas for innovations and startups and have the ability to attract huge manpower. (IBEF, 2023)

The local knowledge is greatly needed by all multinational companies across the globe. Self-Reliant India has channelized this high-level creativity within India in order to manufacture products and services to meet the needs of the domestic market at the level of international standards. (IBEF, 2023)

After the launch of Startup India in 2016, the country has seen an eruption of entrepreneurship leading to a significant impact on jobs creation. The information technology sector holds the top position in providing jobs by employing 204,119 professionals through technology-based companies. Although the healthcare sector stands close to the top with 147,693 vacancies, there has been a remarkable rise in job openings in the education sector with 90,414 vacancies. (Business Today, 2024).

Start-ups emerging in the field of agriculture and construction through new age technologies and smart practices and are generating thousands of jobs in rural India. this addresses the problem of employment crisis at the grassroot level. With the rapid advancement of digital payments and internet banking, Financial Technology start-ups (FinTech) have created substantial employment opportunities. (Business Today, 2024)

Start-ups are making immense contributions to India's GDP and employment landscape. Boasting more than 80,000 start-ups and over 100 unicorns, the ecosystem has emerged as an integral part of the national economy. Such huge venture capital funding of \$36 billion in 2021 underlines investors' confidence in the country's start-up potential. A staggering 1.6 million jobs created, the number itself speaks volumes about the impact startups have created so far in the job market by providing diversified opportunities across industries. The surge in job creation also contributes to reducing unemployment and boosting India's economic recovery, especially for young graduates and skilled professionals.

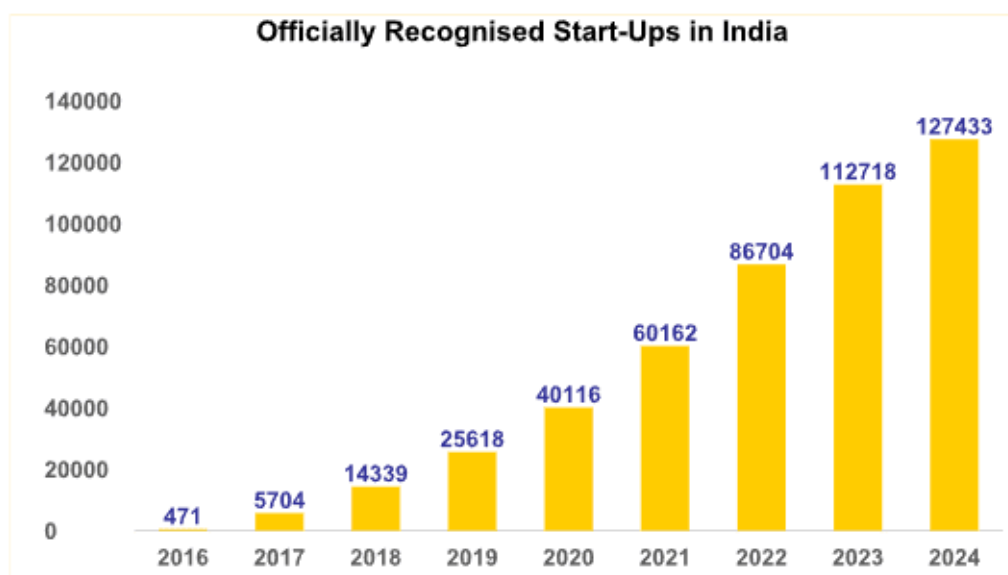
According to the **Economic Survey (2024-2025)**, India's startup ecosystem is the world's third-largest, with over 157,000 DPIIT-recognized startups as of December 2024, creating over 1.7 million jobs directly and driving job creation more effectively than large enterprises in the same industries. The IT Services sector has



created the most jobs, followed by Healthcare & Lifesciences and Professional & Commercial Services. The survey also highlights a significant rise in youth employment in the organized sector and the increasing role of women entrepreneurs, with nearly half of recognized startups having at least one woman director.

According to **DPIIT's report titled: "PRABHAAV"**, Since its launch in 2016, the Startup India initiative has changed the country's entrepreneurial landscape. The number of recognized startups has jumped from around 500 in 2016 to 1.59 lakh by January 2025. This growth makes India the third-largest startup hub in the world. It has not only spurred innovation but also created many job opportunities. Between 2016 and October 2024, startups across the nation generated over 16.6 lakh direct jobs, showing how important the sector is to the economy. Among these jobs, IT services have become the largest employer with over 2 lakh positions. Healthcare, professional and commercial services, and education also play significant roles, showcasing the diversity and strength of India's startup ecosystem.

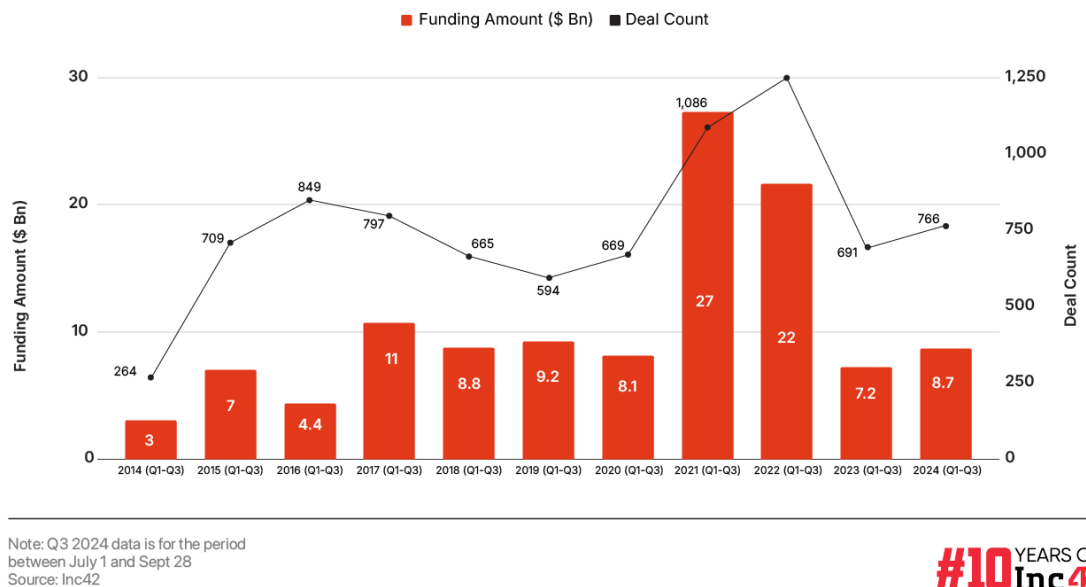
Figure 1: Number of officially recognised start-ups in India (2016- 2024)



Source: Statista, Dept of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

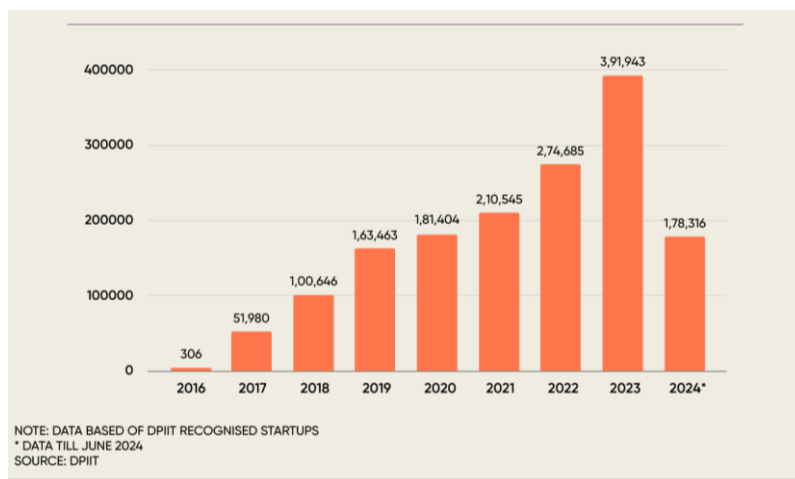
Source: Statista

Figure 2: Increase in investments and funding in Indian Startups



Source: Inc42

Figure 3: Direct jobs created by DPIIT recognised Indian Startups from 2016-2024



Source: DPIIT

Figure 1 shows the number of start-ups registered under the Start-up India initiative crossed 100,000 in 2023, indicating rapid ecosystem growth. Correspondingly, Figure 2 shows how funding inflows to Indian Startups increased.

Figure 3 shows a jump in job creation to 392,000(approx.) in 2023 alone, confirming the employment-generation potential of start-ups.

The first objective of the National Education Policy 2020 is vocational education and teachers' capacity building through which learners' employability and vocational skills will be enhanced at all levels.



In collaboration with Quest Alliance, the new vocational training program was launched by the education authorities during 'Shikshak Parv 2022.' This program emphasizes developing self-learning abilities and imparting contemporary skills that are indispensable in today's economy. In case of effective use of professional counselling and government assistance, a commercial outlook can be efficiently developed among students from the secondary school level itself.

For instance, the recent establishment of various technical laboratories known as Atal Tinkering Labs by the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) enables students from middle school to higher secondary to interact with advanced devices such as 3D printing technology, robotics, electronics kits, etc., and devise innovative ways to solve practical problems in their surroundings. Presently, more than 5,000 such laboratories have been operational in 650 districts, catering to approximately two million students. (Action Plan for Startup India, January 2016)

Moreover, the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) model entails "Startup fests," which serve as the main innovation hub for kids in 500,000 schools. Also, there is an annual contest that intends to create world-class business incubators, and specialized innovation programs are envisaged to benefit the students enrolled in half a million schools across the nation. (Action Plan for Startup India, January 2016) [RG 1] source?

This approach enables learners to adopt a critical viewpoint, making them aware of what their communities require so that they can be in the driver's seat of change due to their creativity and knowledge.

There are many learning institutes which have adopted a curriculum that emphasizes business learning along with development areas where experts mentor them, finance them, and connect them with their peers. This way, students get practical knowledge as well as guidance from experienced individuals in the industry. The government wishes to sensitize the students with entrepreneurial aptitude to be motivated not only to be channelize his/her potential but also to become a source of job creation and contribute to the development of the country.

Curated courses can be introduced in high schools in collaboration with emerging start-ups and companies across different fields to motivate students and scout potential entrepreneurial talents,

Teachers in educational institutions, can make business theories interesting through the use of sales simulation activities, where each learner is expected to come up with a novel idea of a business that can thrive in the real world.

They might also be asked to study business models around the world and give their take on them. The curriculum should have graded assessments on these practical aspects of commerce other than the theory.

Nationwide surveys reveal the extent of vocational education in Indian schools to be minimal. The PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 conducted by NCERT shows that just 47% of schools offer skill-based courses for Grades 9 and above. Only 29% of students are engaged in such activities (India Today, 2024).

Delhi is showing a lot of significant changes at the local level. More than 4,20,000 students from Delhi government schools enrolled in vocational courses in 2024. The school-leaving certificate holders were mainly targeted in a successful campaign, and thus Class XII graduates were supported by more than 30 companies which together facilitated the job market for them. (The Times of India, 2024).

However, the national employability trends are still at a low level. It is stated that out of the total 1.6 million skill trainees under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) between 2015 and 2022, only less



than 15% have found employment which indicates a large transition gap between training and the workforce (The Economic Times, 2024).

The World Bank and CBSE partnership is a step not only toward quality but also market relevance of vocational education programmes which are expected to open up the way for easier school-to-work transitions. (World Bank, 2024).

Area disparities continue to exist. Even though Gujarat leads in vocational education with its infrastructure, student enrolment is still very low. Contrarily, Delhi and Chandigarh have shown that students' interest can be very high even if the resources are limited. At the same time, Bihar and Odisha are dealing with the problem of a lack of course offerings. (The Times of India, 2024)

Conclusion:

Start-ups have become a major force in the Indian job market. They create millions of jobs and drive inclusive economic growth and innovation. Educational institutions need to play a vital role to keep this momentum going. Schools should integrate entrepreneurial education and skill development into their programs.

The process of empowering young Indians to engage in creative thinking, to make informed risks, and innovating for the betterment of society resonates well with India's overall ambition to become a self-reliant and innovative economy. Developing such traits through practical knowledge, mentoring, and exposure would enable young Indians to shift from job seekers to job creators, which is essential for leveraging India's demographic dividend.

Recommendations:

1. Integrating entrepreneurial education into mainstream curricula –

- India has one of the highest levels of youth unemployment rates as opposed to its labour force participation rates. It is therefore needed to integrate entrepreneurship into education curriculum so that young Indians can start creating jobs.

2. Strengthening collaboration amongst schools, incubators and industries –

- Despite India's growing start-up ecosystem, the school-to-industry innovation link remains weak, leading to a gap between education and employability. Strengthening partnerships will help students gain hands-on learning, mentorship, and early exposure to business ecosystems – indispensable for creating a development model built on ingenuity throughout every corner of the nation.

3. Regularly Update Skill-based Curricula to Align with Emerging Industry Needs

- The Indian economy is rapidly shifting toward sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, renewable energy, Financial Technology, and e-commerce. To maintain competitiveness at the global level, our education system must reflect these market trends. Updating curricula ensures industry relevance and increases the employability of graduates in relevant sectors.



In conclusion, fostering an education ecosystem that integrates entrepreneurship, industry collaboration, and dynamic skill development will empower India's youth to not only seek jobs but to also be able to create jobs. Such a holistic approach can bridge the gap between education and employability, driving sustainable innovation and inclusive economic growth.

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Gender and Craft in Kumartuli: The Changing Dynamics of Idol-Making in Kolkata

Ankana Roy, Garima Tripathi, Anjali Shaw, Dr. Rupa Ghosh

Abstract

This paper examines the roles, contributions, and challenges of women artisans in the clay idol-making industry of Kumartuli, Kolkata. Historically a male-dominated craft embedded in caste and family hierarchies, Kumartuli has witnessed a gradual but significant entry of women into production, management, and pedagogical roles. Using qualitative observation, informal interviews, and secondary literature, the study investigates how women navigate the sexual division of labour, negotiate identity and recognition, and contribute to craft heritage. Findings reveal that women's work, while essential, remains undervalued, yet women are increasingly challenging traditional norms through leadership, training, and globalised production. The study highlights implications for craft policy, heritage preservation, and gender equity in informal artisanal sectors.

Keywords: Kumartuli, clay idol-making, women artisans, gender division of labour, craft heritage, identity formation, India

Introduction

Clay has been central to human civilization since its earliest days. The first cuneiform scripts were written on clay tablets, and ancient civilizations such as the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia used clay extensively for writing, idol-making, pottery, and construction. Clay served both practical and symbolic purposes, shaping daily life and religious practice. In India, clay continues to hold cultural and economic importance. From the diyas used during Diwali to archaeological remains at Harappan sites, its presence spans millennia. In both rural and urban India, clay idols became central to domestic and public worship. During the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, terracotta art flourished, especially in regions such as Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. The Bhakti movement further expanded the demand for accessible icons of gods and saints, often made from clay and worshipped in temporary shrines.

With time, regional festivals began to incorporate large-scale clay idols. In West Bengal, Durga Puja led to elaborate idol-making traditions centered in places like Krishnanagar and Kumartuli. Today, India's clay industry encompasses both industrial ceramics and traditional craft sectors. The latter survive in specific regions where skills are passed down through families, often structured along lines of caste and community. Kolkata's Kumartuli (alternatively: Kumorpara, or "potters' quarters/neighbourhood") is one such hub of traditional clay idol makers. Here, artisans craft idols of gods and goddesses using straw, clay, and bamboo frames. These idols are central to major festivals and are exported across India and abroad. Despite their global reach, the working lives of Kumartuli's artisans remain shaped by local hierarchies, informal economies, and largely invisible systems of labor.

Historically, the craft has been structured by caste, tradition, and gender. Historically, the craft has been structured by caste, tradition, and gender. Male artisans (karigars) dominate public and managerial roles,



while women have been confined to supportive or invisible labour. However, the entry of women into prominent roles marks a shift in both labour practices and identity formation. This paper explores how women artisans navigate the intersections of caste, gender, and craft in Kumartuli, investigating the division of labour, the negotiation of legitimacy, and the preservation of artisanal heritage.

Literature Review

The clay artisans of Kumortuli primarily belong to the Kumbhar caste, traditionally associated with pottery and idol-making. Many trace their lineage to skilled craft communities from Krishnanagar and Shantipur (Saraswati, 1978). Sudhir Chakravarti (1985) underscores the significance of royal patronage in sustaining these artisanal traditions, particularly through festivals such as the Jagatdhatri Puja in Krishnanagar and Chandannagar, and the Rash Utsav in Nabadwip (Sen, 2015). Historical accounts also recount how Maharaja Krishnachandra of Krishnanagar invited artisans from Natore (present-day Bangladesh) to meet the increasing ritualistic demands of the time (Goldblatt, 1979). By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some of these artisans migrated to Kolkata, laying the foundations of what is now known as Kumortuli.

Kumortuli's emergence as a prominent center for idol-making was not only shaped by patronage but also by its geographic and logistical advantages. Its proximity to essential resources, namely, timber from Shyambazar and Maniktola, clay from Diamond Harbour and Uluberia, and sandy soil from the banks of the Ganges made it an ideal location for the craft. Early artisans arrived from nearby towns such as Chandannagar, Srirampur, and Bally. Over time, aspiring craftsmen from different regions came to learn the techniques, transforming Kumortuli into a thriving center of traditional knowledge and folk artistry (Paul & Das, 2021).

Anthropological and ethnographic literature on Kumartuli has largely focused on caste hierarchies, spatial configurations, and collective cultural practices (Sen, 2015; Paul & Das, 2021). While these studies offer a comprehensive overview, they often overlook the personal narratives and everyday realities of female artisans. The caste-homogenous nature of the community, dominated by the Kumbhars, serves as social capital, promoting trust and collaboration. This cohesion forms part of the community's habitus, while the artisanal field of Kumartuli defines legitimate participation, authority, and visibility (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986). However, this cohesion is also a mechanism through which conventional gender roles are upheld.

Women, especially those born or married into idol-making families, are generally expected to conform to traditional supportive roles, performing essential but unacknowledged labour behind the scenes (Dutta, 2018). Despite these limitations, many women internalize caste-based gender expectations to gain legitimacy, respect, and social security. This negotiation between conformity and recognition shapes unique processes of identity formation among female artisans (Chatterjee, 2021). Journalistic accounts corroborate these trends, noting that only a small proportion of workshops are women-led, yet women increasingly occupy visible creative and entrepreneurial roles (Chowdhury, 2023; SheThePeople, 2021).

Methodology

Site Selection The study was conducted in Kumartuli, a neighbourhood in northern Kolkata under the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. The locality is known for its traditional potters' region, producing idols for goddesses such as Durga, Kali, and Saraswati. The area was selected for its comprehensive representation of the craft and its relevance for studying gendered labour dynamics.

Research Design This qualitative study employs an ethnographic-inspired approach, combining direct observation of workshops, informal interviews, and secondary literature review. Key informants included



senior male artisans, women artisans in leadership positions, and workshop assistants. Observations were conducted during pre-festival and festival seasons.

Data Collection Data were collected through participatory observation and informal interviews, noting task allocation, workshop layout, interaction patterns, and women's participation in production and training. Secondary sources supplemented field data, including journal articles, media reports, and online archives.

Analytical Framework Analysis drew on feminist labour theory (Mies, 1986), emotional labour theory (Hochschild, 1983), and Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital to understand intersections of gender, caste, and craft. The built environment was also considered as a structural factor shaping labour practices and visibility.

Results

The Built Environment and Integrated Labour Spaces Workshops are narrow, elongated spaces serving as work areas, storage, and living quarters. Women perform domestic-adjacent tasks such as clay mixing, decorating, and cleaning, while men occupy front workshop areas for primary idol-making. This spatial arrangement reinforces traditional gender hierarchies and mirrors deeper cultural norms (Bourdieu, 1977).

Gendered Division of Labour Idol-making involves stages from frame construction to detailing and finishing. Men traditionally dominate large-scale modelling, while women's tasks are described as peripheral, including painting and decoration. Women increasingly lead teams, paint miniatures, and handle export orders, but men continue to dominate managerial roles.

Entry Pathways for Women Artisans Women have traditionally participated in almost every stage of idol-making, yet their contributions often remain invisible. From preparing straw and clay to decorating, painting, and finishing, women sustain the production chain but are rarely acknowledged. Their roles are often described as helping rather than creating, reinforcing their invisibility.

Long-held beliefs, such as "meyere maayer jaat" (women, being like mothers, should not engage in money-earning work), restricted public recognition of women's contributions.

During the 1990s, women like Mala Pal and China Pal emerged as visible artisans. Mala Pal began idol-making around age fifteen after her father's death, initially assisting her brother Gobinda Pal. She gained national recognition when invited to exhibit at the National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum in New Delhi. Today, she leads a team of seven to eight artisans, specialising in miniature Durga idols exported internationally. She also runs a weekend school to teach clay modelling. China Pal similarly took over her family's workshop, becoming a respected figure in Kumartuli. These cases show that while women have always been integral, only a few have transitioned from invisibility to leadership.

Recognition and Emotional Labour Women contribute significant emotional labour while their physical and creative contributions remain undervalued. Recognition is often tied to familial duty rather than independent achievement.

Discussion

The findings reveal that while women have historically participated in nearly every stage of idol-making in Kumartuli, their work has often been overlooked or undervalued. The built environment of workshops, where men occupy the front areas for sculpting and client interaction and women work in the interior sections on painting, decoration, or material preparation, reinforces this invisibility. This spatial division



mirrors deeper gender hierarchies within artisanal production and reflects the habitus internalized by artisans and the field's structuring of authority and visibility (Bourdieu, 1977).

Feminist labour theory (Mies, 1986) frames women's work as invisible productive labour. The gendered division of labour not only limits access to decision-making and market control but also shapes social perceptions of skill and authorship. Emotional labour, as discussed by Hochschild (1983), further extends women's contributions into the realms of care, coordination, and relationship management within workshops, where they often balance creative, domestic, and interpersonal responsibilities simultaneously.

Bourdieu's concepts of cultural, social, and symbolic capital explain women artisans' navigation of a male-dominated field. Technical skill represents cultural capital, familial and caste networks provide social capital, but symbolic capital, such as recognition and prestige, is limited (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986). Caste and kinship networks regulate access to training and legitimacy. The few women with visibility, like Mala Pal and China Pal, represent exceptions rather than the norm, signaling gradual change but incomplete transformation of structural hierarchies.

Caste and kinship networks continue to regulate access to training and legitimacy. While these networks provide continuity and material support, they also reinforce male control over workshop ownership and public representation. The few women who have gained visibility, such as Mala Pal and China Pal, represent exceptions rather than the norm. Their emergence signals a gradual but meaningful change, where necessity and skill have translated into recognition and agency. However, for the majority of women artisans, participation still occurs under familial names, with their creative labour subsumed within collective workshop identity.

Overall, Kumartuli remains a site of both continuity and contestation. Women's labour is central to the craft's survival, yet their recognition lags behind their contribution. Recent developments show that some women are beginning to move from invisibility to leadership, but the transformation of structural hierarchies remains incomplete.

Policy implications include the need for financial support, formal recognition, infrastructural aid, and gender-inclusive craft policies to support women's contributions and preserve artisanal heritage.

Conclusion

Women artisans in Kumartuli have always been integral to the craft of idol-making, performing essential but often invisible work that sustains production, quality, and continuity. Their roles span from clay preparation and ornamentation to painting and finishing, yet their labour has rarely been acknowledged as artistic or professional. For generations, their contributions were confined to the margins of recognition, overshadowed by the public prominence of male artisans.

In recent decades, a small but significant number of women have begun to move into visible and autonomous positions within the craft. Figures such as Mala Pal and China Pal have challenged entrenched social and cultural boundaries, transforming necessity into creative leadership. Despite these changes, systemic barriers related to caste, gender, and workshop inheritance continue to restrict most women's access to independent authorship and market visibility.

The persistence of undervalued and unacknowledged labour highlights the need for policies and institutional frameworks that formally recognise women's contributions to artisanal heritage. Financial support, training programs, and representation in cultural initiatives can help correct the imbalance between contribution and recognition. Sustaining the craft of Kumartuli therefore requires not only preserving its



artistic tradition but also ensuring that the women whose hands shape the idols are acknowledged as equal creators of Kolkata's cultural identity.

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Integrating Gender Studies as a discipline in the School Curriculum: A Critical and Intersectional Perspective

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Abstract

The excerpt from Without a Place foregrounds the early internalisation of gendered roles, where boys and girls are subtly directed into unequal spaces within both the household and the classroom. This paper examines the purpose of education in constructing, reinforcing, or altering gender roles. Attaining gender equality in education goes beyond facilitating access and increasing retention; it demands scrutiny of entrenched socio-cultural gender norms and practices embedded in institutions and reflected in curricula.

In this paper, we draw on Gender Studies and reflect on differences between sex and gender, gender as a performative and social construct, and how gender is shaped by processes of socialisation through family, school, media, etc. We engage with feminist theories and studies of masculinities. We discuss how gender is addressed in educational systems and how these address or even reproduce gender differences and inequalities. The paper also explores gender bias in classrooms, textbooks, and teaching approaches, and how these influence students' aspirations, participation, and perceptions of themselves as learners. The paper also uses the Indian socio-cultural context to highlight the additional layers of bias that girls and women face because of intersecting factors like class, caste, and tradition. The paper draws on the concept of intersectionality developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw to highlight how different axes of inequality intersect to produce unique experiences of discrimination and marginalisation for girls and women.

The research also reveals the prospect of education becoming a transformative site of inclusivity and critical consciousness. Teachers can be crucial change agents as they create gender-sensitive classrooms that break down gender stereotypes and challenge binary gender identities. Studying gender also needs to be incorporated into curricula and pedagogy in order to promote greater empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility among students and future citizens.

In the final section, a conclusion is drawn by stressing the urgency for a radical change in practice, addressing gender inequality and challenging dominant attitudes to encourage critical evaluation of the societal norms that dominate society and transform these to create a more equal society, where inclusivity and equity are integral to all aspects of education.

Keywords: Equality & Inequality, Gender - Gender Equality in Education, Gender Socialisation, Gender Roles and Relations, Theory - Feminist Theory, Masculinity Studies, Intersectionality, Curriculum - Curriculum and Textbook Representation, Classroom Differences - Gender Bias in Classrooms, Teachers and Teaching - Teacher Agency, Inclusion - Inclusive Education, Gender, Sexuality & Society - Social Construction of Gender, Educational Development - Educational Reform



Introduction

“We were shown our place
in the first grade.
We remembered our elementary school lessons
Ram, go to school, son,
Radha, go and cook pakora!
Ram, sip sugar syrup,
Radha, bring your broom!
Ram, bedtime, school tomorrow
Radha, go and make the bed for brother.
Aha! This is your new house
Look Ram! Here’s your room
“And mine?”

-Without a Place, Anamika.

To achieve gender equality in education, it is incumbent to go beyond simply ensuring both girls and boys are enrolled and retained in schools—it requires strategic approaches to dismantle societal obstacles and promote inclusivity. Educational institutions need to tackle socio-economic issues, cultural prejudices, and infrastructural shortcomings that disproportionately impact one gender, particularly girls. By establishing mise-en-scène where each student can excel, schools play a role in advancing a more equitable and just society.

“Gender studies is a field of study that looks at the world from the perspective of gender. This means that while studying something – the distribution of resources within a household, a social unit like a caste group, a bill placed before Parliament, a development project, or the classification of different species – is done in a manner that takes into account the fact that different genders exist in the world.” The realm of gender studies critically analyses how society constructs gender and how this construction influences societal attitudes, roles, and responsibilities. It examines how patriarchal standards shape gender identities and perpetuate inequalities through various agents like family, media, and education. *Incorporating gender studies into educational programs challenges traditional narratives and empowers students to challenge stereotypes and engage thoughtfully with societal norms.*

Educational institutions serve as both reflections of societal norms and as catalysts for transformation. Schools need to go beyond just imparting academic knowledge to cultivating inclusive environments where varied experiences are acknowledged and valued. Curriculum development and teaching methods should highlight feminist viewpoints and other critical frameworks, preparing future educators to address gender issues with sensitivity and effectiveness. This includes examining how peers, teachers, and educational materials influence gender perceptions and socialisation processes.



By thoroughly investigating the gendered experiences of boys and girls in different socio-cultural settings, education can reveal the mechanisms of gender socialisation and emphasise the structural barriers to accomplishing equitable education for all genders. Teachers, as catalysts for change, are essential in fostering inclusivity, equity, and critical analysis of gender norms. Consequently, gender studies within education become a powerful instrument, nurturing a generation that appreciates diversity and equality while being ready to confront deep-rooted inequalities in society.

History and Evolution

The origins of gender studies can be dated back to the liberation movements of women of the 1960s and 1970s, which confronted conventional gender roles and fought for women's rights. This movement itself has taken inspiration from earlier feminist thinkers and activists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who advocated for women's education and equality, and suffrage leaders like Emmeline Pankhurst, who campaigned for women's political rights. During this era, academics began to question the notion that gender was solely a biological reality rather than a social construct. Influential thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir further strengthened this perspective by examining how society shapes gender roles. Scholars posited that gender is an intricate interplay of cultural meanings and practices that are created and reinforced through socialisation.

As the field has developed, it has broadened to include the exploration of the role of men and identities, as well as the experiences of non-binary and transgender individuals, and the overarching idea of gender as a social construct. It also acknowledges the contributions of reformers like Savitribai Phule and Pandita Ramabai, who worked towards women's education and empowerment in diverse cultural contexts. Presently, gender studies integrates perspectives from a variety of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, literature, and others, emphasising its essential role in gaining a holistic understanding of human behaviour and societal evolution.

The significance and essence of gender studies are clear in its dedication to analysing gender in all its manifestations and consequences. This field offers insights into the varied experiences of gender across different cultures and societies and also advocates for a more just world by confronting gender biases and stereotypes—an effort historically supported by activists like Sojourner Truth and Betty Friedan. By employing an interdisciplinary approach, gender studies cultivates a greater appreciation for the complexities of gender and its significant influence on both individual lives and shared identities.

Features of Gender Studies

Gender studies refers to the academic study of the phenomena of gender. Within feminist thought, a variance has been made between 'sex' and 'gender'. Sex is commonly understood as a classification based on genetic, chromosomal, and anatomical differences, traditionally defined

as male, female, or intersex. Gender, on the other hand, represents the social meanings and expectations attached to these categories. While often seen as distinct—sex as biological and fixed, and gender as fluid and socially constructed—this distinction is far more complex. Both are, to varying degrees, shaped by societal norms and cultural interpretations. As Bittner and Goodyear-Grant (2017) argue, equating sex with gender is a flawed assumption that excludes individuals whose experiences and identities don't fit neatly within these conventional categories. Recognising this complexity invites a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of human identity. As philosopher Judith Butler famously articulated, "*Gender is not something one is, but something one does – an act, a 'doing' rather than a 'being.'*" This viewpoint emphasises the gravity of recognising and challenging conventional gender norms within educational settings.



Gender Roles and Relations

Gender roles are the roles and behaviours that society believes individuals should adopt according to their gender. These roles can differ greatly across various cultures, social classes, historical contexts, and economic conditions (FAO, 1997). Additional factors like family structure, resource availability, and environmental conditions also influence these expectations. For example, labels such as "housewife" and "repairman" illustrate traditional role assignments that have often reinforced gender biases in both professional and personal domains.

Gender relations describe how societies organise interactions, rights, and responsibilities between men and women (Bravo-Baumann, 2000). These relations are shaped by cultural norms and social conditioning rather than being rooted in inherent biological characteristics. Historically, men are typically considered the primary earners and decision-makers, whereas women have mainly been tasked with caregiving and household responsibilities. Such societal frameworks create power disparities, leading to men frequently dominating financial, legal, and social decision-making.

Different social institutions play a vital role in reinforcing these roles throughout an individual's life. Socialising agents, such as parents, teachers, peers, media, and religious institutions, educate and normalise gender expectations. Parents, in particular, have a considerable impact by modelling behaviours and emphasising gender-specific responsibilities from an early age. These acquired roles are internalised and often perpetuate gendered norms in subsequent generations.

The continuation of rigid gender roles nurtures societal models that delineate "acceptable" behaviour for men and women, with those who deviate often facing social stigma. In numerous societies, family structures are arranged around these traditional roles, reinforcing power inequalities that limit personal development and self-expression. Tackling these deeply rooted roles and fostering more inclusive, equitable gender relations is vital for creating progressive and just social environments.

Inclusion of Gender Studies Across Countries: A Comparative Overview

Gender Studies have a different status in different countries. In the Western world, countries such as the US, UK, and Canada have well-established programs of Gender Studies with departments, strong research communities and a range of degrees at all levels that are connected to Gender Studies. Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that can stimulate discussion and critical thinking on issues of identity, power, inequality and a range of other social structures. In many European Union countries, Gender Studies are taught as an independent subject and also as a cross-cutting theme in a variety of educational programs and curricula. This is supported by education policies aimed at promoting gender equality.

As opposed to a more advanced stage of Gender Studies existing in many developed countries, including Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Gender Studies are in their infancy in South Asia and in numerous countries in Africa. In some countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the subject may be absent or dealt with obliquely for cultural and/or political reasons. Although Gender Studies are offered as optional courses or as part of broader sociology or education programmes in several countries, they are not offered as a standalone programme. Gender Studies have gained international recognition with respect to their relevance for education, but, while included in curricula in many countries, the level of implementation differs due to national-specific circumstances.



Theories of Gender Identity in Education

Gender identity is an intricate and multifaceted notion that begins to develop at birth through a combination of genetic, biological, and societal factors. In educational contexts, various theories have emerged to explain how individuals construct and articulate their perceptions of gender. Generally, a child's fundamental gender identity is formed around the age of three, making any later alterations quite difficult. Societies often impose defined gender categories that influence a person's social identity and interactions. However, these identities can either correspond with the sex designated at birth or diverge from it, illustrating the fluid and evolving characteristics of gender.

Grasping gender identity theories is crucial for educators who aim to cultivate inclusive spaces that honour diverse expressions of identity. Education plays an essential role in shaping societal perceptions, highlighting the importance of examining these theories through three distinct lenses: feminism, masculinity theories, and social constructionism. As philosopher Judith Butler famously articulated, "Gender is not something one is, but something one does—an act, a 'doing' rather than a 'being.'" This viewpoint emphasises the importance of recognising and challenging conventional gender norms within educational settings.

Feminist and Masculinity Theories

Feminist and masculinity theories provide a window into how gender dynamics impact educational experiences and results. These frameworks expose how educational systems frequently uphold traditional gender roles, perpetuate inequality, and influence students' identities and self-esteem.

Feminist theory, emerging in the 1830s alongside the feminist movement in the U.S. and Europe, advocates for eliminating gender inequalities and dismantling patriarchal structures. It emphasises that gender roles are socially constructed, granting power and privilege to men while marginalising women (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2018). Feminist theorists assert that women's struggles, including mental health issues and experiences of violence, are consequences of systemic inequality rather than personal failings. Feminist viewpoints stress the necessity of addressing gender imbalances within educational spaces. Historically, girls have faced marginalisation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines while being steered towards "feminine" fields like the humanities and caregiving professions. Feminist educators espouse curricula that confront gender stereotypes and support gender-sensitive teaching methods.

Consciousness-raising in classrooms is a vital strategy employed by feminist educators to help students recognise and evaluate societal structures that uphold gender norms. Intersectional feminism, as articulated by scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, further emphasises how race, class, and other identities intersect with gender to influence educational access and experiences. In diverse societies like India, addressing these intersections is essential to advancing equitable educational opportunities for every student.

Masculinity theories investigate how boys and men navigate education while facing the pressure to comply with traditional masculine norms. Educational institutions typically reward traits associated with hyper-masculinity, such as competitiveness and assertiveness, while discouraging emotional openness and vulnerability. As Michael Kimmel, a prominent scholar on masculinity, noted, "Masculinity is a constantly shifting landscape, a terrain fraught with contradictions and tensions."

Pleck's Gender Role Strain Paradigm (GRSP) demonstrates how strict gender expectations can result in academic stress, behavioural problems, and disengagement from learning. Pleck identified three categories of gender role strain: **Discrepancy Strain**, where failing to meet societal gender expectations lowers self-esteem and causes distress; **Dysfunction Strain**, where adherence to harmful gender norms (such as



emotional suppression and risk-taking) fosters violence and social issues (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995); and **Trauma Strain**, where socialization into masculinity, including rites of passage and emotional stoicism, can cause lasting psychological damage (Levant & Powell, 2017). Additionally, Pleck introduced the idea of Masculine Ideology, which pertains to the internalization of cultural beliefs regarding masculinity. This ideology significantly influences an individual's self-worth and actions, often reinforcing damaging stereotypes that impact educational involvement and personal growth.

Gender Inequalities and Biases in Classrooms

Gender bias within the educational setting remains a widespread issue with serious consequences. Nevertheless, schools should serve as environments where children can explore concepts and develop new skills. Gender discrimination serves as a major barrier to education, impacting both boys and girls in different ways, especially in their social development. Studies frequently indicate that the school curriculum perpetuates these obstacles related to gender perceptions. In light of gender roles in Indian culture, achieving gender equality remains an ongoing challenge. In certain areas, boys' access to education is restricted by societal expectations that require them to work instead of attending school. Likewise, in many regions worldwide, girls often experience gender discrimination while striving for an education.

When teachers are asked about their views on gender inequality in the classroom, they commonly claim that they treat all their students uniformly. However, this viewpoint could reflect either a belief or a misunderstanding because this statement presents two issues. First, students are varied and possess different learning requirements; asserting that all students receive the same treatment suggests that every child ought to have equal learning opportunities. Second, teachers might unwittingly overlook students who struggle to learn as effectively as their classmates. Such biases toward particular students can lead to unnoticed and unintended effects on the thoughts of teachers, administrators, and peers within educational institutions.

These biases can impact classroom interactions, teacher-student relationships, and educational policies. Girls may face stereotypes that diminish their potential in STEM areas, while boys may be confronted with norms about being stoic or demonstrating leadership. These biases can sustain inequality, restricting students' options and reinforcing societal gender expectations. Addressing gender bias necessitates deliberate actions, which include training teachers to recognize and address biases, creating inclusive curricula, and fostering a setting that appreciates diversity. A gender-inclusive educational environment not only fosters equality but also improves the overall educational experience by encouraging individual talents and aspirations, regardless of gender.

Representation of gender roles in school textbooks and curricula

The representation of gender roles in educational materials and curricula significantly influences the learning experiences of students, as school textbooks serve as foundational resources. These resources communicate vital information across various subjects and viewpoints. How gender roles are illustrated in school textbooks is pivotal in shaping societal perceptions and expectations. Ensuring that educational materials accurately represent gender roles is essential for challenging damaging stereotypes, promoting critical analysis, and helping to cultivate a more inclusive and progressive society. It fosters the belief that individuals, regardless of their gender, can pursue any career or role, dismantling barriers and encouraging a more equitable and diverse future.

Proponents of gender equality advocate for more inclusive and varied representations in textbooks to mirror the realities of different gender experiences and to encourage a fairer understanding of the roles individuals can occupy in society. Nearly all socialization that occurs within schools can play a crucial role in either



reinforcing or altering what children have learned within their families. The content found in textbooks and curricula impacts students' comprehension of history, science, literature, and social norms.

Consequently, contemporary textbooks strive to provide a balanced view of men and women, highlighting their accomplishments across various domains. Advocacy against stereotypical portrayals of genders needs to be obligatory, and societal biases must be eradicated from educational materials. Although there is still a limited understanding of gender and equality in practice, one way to tackle barriers to women's progress is through development.

Textbooks may depict historical events with a gender bias, emphasizing one gender's contributions while minimizing the roles of others. Thus, policymakers are vital in creating more inclusive and neutral portrayals of gender roles within educational resources. Such efforts can

help mitigate the reinforcement of stereotypes and expand the representation of diverse gender identities and expressions. Well-designed textbooks and curricula encourage critical thinking and contribute to the comprehensive development of students by offering a rounded and thorough education.

Role of Education in Addressing Gender Norms

Education functions as a powerful mechanism for challenging and transforming societal standards concerning gender. By incorporating feminist and masculinity theories into lesson plans, educators can motivate students to critically analyse traditional gender roles and cultivate a more inclusive comprehension of identity. Schools need to establish environments where students feel secure expressing themselves genuinely, liberated from the restrictions of stringent gender expectations.

Welcoming a range of perspectives on gender identity in education not only nurtures empathy and understanding but also equips students to navigate and contribute to a world that is increasingly intricate and inclusive.

Gender identity is shaped at birth through genetic or other biological influences. In education, various theories seek to explain how individuals form and express their understanding of gender. Typically, a child's core gender identity is established by around the age of three, and altering it afterward can be quite challenging. Societies typically have a set of gender categories that form the foundation of a person's social identity in relation to others. However, these gender identities may align with the sex assigned at birth or may differ from it. Grasping these theories enables educators to foster inclusive environments that acknowledge and honour diverse expressions of gender identity, enhancing the equity of the educational experience. Gender extends beyond a mere personal trait; it has significant implications for various social and cultural practices. Therefore, discussing theories of gender identity within educational frameworks can facilitate the planning and adjustment of social viewpoints, making it essential to consider these theories from three distinct angles.

Role of teachers in reinforcing gender equality

Educators' role in promoting gender equality is sacrosanct. Teachers are individuals who cultivate a classroom atmosphere that encourages equality, ensuring that each student feels appreciated and respected, regardless of their gender. Consequently, they are essential in upholding gender equality within the educational framework and beyond. To start, educators act as powerful role models, confronting traditional gender roles by showcasing diversity in their professional paths and actions. They motivate students to explore any area of interest, regardless of conventional gender expectations. In addition, teachers play a pivotal role in developing a gender-inclusive curriculum, making certain that educational resources and



activities are devoid of bias. By advocating for varied viewpoints and accomplishments across different fields, teachers assist in dismantling gender stereotypes present in textbooks and coursework.

Nonetheless, millions of girls worldwide remain out of school. It is evident that gender discrimination largely impacts these young individuals globally, due to various specific hurdles hindering their access to and completion of education. Thus, promoting awareness and education concerning equality among various gender identities is essential. Teachers must tackle these concerns and discourage gender-based discrimination, thereby fostering an environment conducive to open dialogue. Training educators in gender sensitivity and inclusiveness provides them with the necessary skills to recognize and confront biases, nurturing an educational setting that enables all students to flourish without gender-related restrictions. In the end, teachers are instrumental in cultivating a future generation that values and practices gender equality in every facet of life.

Conclusion

Incorporating gender studies into the school curriculum is crucial for breaking down gender-based social norms and promoting a learning atmosphere that appreciates diversity and inclusivity. Although there has been progress in enhancing the visibility of girls' education, the curriculum often does not adequately represent the achievements and contributions of girls in Indian society. A curriculum that is regularly updated and sensitive to gender issues, along with well-equipped teachers, can foster classrooms where various identities are honoured. The curriculum should confront conventional gender stereotypes and biases while fostering critical thinking, empathy, and a deeper understanding of gender identities. This methodology empowers learners by expanding their viewpoints and providing diverse role models, ultimately preparing them for an ever-evolving and interconnected world. Successful integration starts with pinpointing gaps in current curriculum resources and evaluating them for gender biases. Learning goals should directly address gender roles and diversity, fostering conversations about gender inclusivity. Ongoing training for educators is essential to provide them with the expertise and resources necessary for gender-sensitive teaching. Utilizing inclusive examples, case studies, and scenarios that reflect a broad range of gender identities ensures that every student feels acknowledged and appreciated. Motivating students to thoughtfully consider and question conventional gender roles encourages them to become more compassionate and socially conscious individuals.

Feminist critiques of conventional knowledge frameworks provide transformative educational insights, advocating for 'child-friendly' classrooms that empower both students and instructors. These critiques support the integration of curricula that tackle gender-based discrimination, promote gender equality, and offer a thorough comprehension of the fluidity and complexity of gender roles. Teachers are vital in executing these transformations, cultivating classroom settings that not only impart knowledge but also encourage respect, empathy, and inclusiveness.

The teachers are the frontline soldiers who are not only in bringing about change in society but are also acting as a shield against the prevailing prejudices and stereotypes. As the principal agent responsible for delivering the curriculum, the teacher's everyday actions in the classroom are where educational theories come to life. Adopting a gender-responsive pedagogy ensures that all children have opportunities to participate equally and are challenged to think critically about stereotypes. Additionally, lesson activities and examples used by teachers should reflect the diverse gender identities and experiences of pupils.

In this role, it is also obligatory to promote inclusive behaviour, where respectful, empathetic and fair behaviour towards all students is modelled, and gender equality is made a normal practice as opposed to just having it as a stated principle. The class teacher plays a key role in identifying, preventing, and



addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including bullying, harassment, and other gender-based discriminatory behaviour and practices. The teacher creates a safe and inclusive classroom environment, encourages discussion and debate on GBV, establishes procedures and channels for delineating incidents of GBV and intervenes appropriately in response to such incidents. A teacher plays a key role in promoting gender equity amongst pupils, and this should be articulated and embodied in the hidden and the formal curriculum of schooling.

Therefore, integrating gender studies provides upcoming generations with the insights and principles needed to create a fairer, more accepting, and inclusive society, establishing the groundwork for a more equitable future.

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Dalit Studies in Contemporary Education: A Tool for Social Awareness and Inclusion

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Abstract

The current paper explores the way Dalit Studies in contemporary education can promote social awareness and inclusion. Despite constitutional provisions and policy interventions, caste-based inequalities continue to persist within academic establishments in India. The findings show that while availability to acquire knowledge and education has improved, the content and structure of curricula often marginalize Dalit narratives. The paper argues that Dalit Studies must move beyond a focus on deprivation to include achievements, resistance, and intellectual contributions, and must be meaningfully integrated across disciplines. It also emphasizes the importance of inclusive pedagogical practices and institutional reforms. The paper concludes that education must go beyond access to ensure genuine inclusion, thereby contributing to a more equitable and socially conscious society.

Keywords: Dalit Studies, Education, Social Inclusion, Curriculum, Caste, Critical Pedagogy

Reasons to Choose the Topic

Dalit Studies is an essential field that addresses discrimination based on caste and the marginalization of Dalit communities. In contemporary society, caste inequalities continue to persist in various forms, including education, employment, and social mobility. The inclusion of Dalit Studies in mainstream education can serve to create social awareness and a more inclusive and equitable society. This topic is significant because it explores how education can be leveraged to challenge deep-seated prejudices and promote empowerment among marginalized communities.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on secondary sources such as academic papers, books, reports, and government policies related to Dalit Studies and education. The study includes an analysis of curriculum structures, educational policies, and scholarly debates on caste and social inclusion. A comparative analysis of educational institutions that incorporate Dalit perspectives is also undertaken to study the effects of such initiatives.

Introduction

"For want of education their intellect deteriorated, for want of intellect their morality decayed, for want of morality their progress stopped, for want of progress their wealth vanished. All their sorrows sprang from illiteracy". ~ Mahatma Jotiba Phule

Dalit Studies is an academic discipline that focuses on the historical, social, and political realities of Dalit communities. Dalits continue to face discrimination despite constitutional provisions in various spheres, including education. This paper examines the contemporary relevance of Dalit Studies and its role in education, highlighting how it can contribute to fostering an inclusive and socially aware generation.



Research Objectives

1. To analyze the contemporary relevance of Dalit Studies in addressing caste-based discrimination.
2. To study how education can help include Dalit experiences and viewpoints in wider academic discussions.
3. To explore the challenges faced in incorporating Dalit Studies within academic curricula.
4. To provide recommendations for enhancing the representation of Dalit perspectives in education.

Literature Review

1. Dalit Studies as a Framework of Resistance and Knowledge Production

Scholars in Dalit Studies argue that not only is the field descriptive but also critical in its approach. B. R. Ambedkar conceptualized stratification or categorization based on caste as “graded inequality,” putting forward the notion that the systematic and social order of power is being maintained through the exclusion of marginalized groups from education and intellectual spaces. His work establishes the foundational argument that education is central to emancipation.

Building on this, Gopal Guru contends that Dalit experiences must be recognized as a distinct category of knowledge without the intervention of upper-caste frameworks. Similarly, Sharmila Rege emphasizes the necessity of a “Dalit standpoint,” which challenges the epistemological dominance of mainstream academia.

2. Representation vs Exclusion in Educational Curricula

A major concern in existing literature is the underrepresentation of Dalit perspectives in formal education. Scholars such as Anand Teltumbde argue that rather than dismantling social inequalities, educational institutions give little or no attention to it. The curriculum, in particular, reflects dominant narratives that marginalize Dalit histories and contributions.

Similarly, Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd highlights how knowledge systems privilege upper-caste experiences while rendering Dalit knowledge invisible. The result is a form of “epistemic exclusion,” where marginalized communities are denied representation within academic discourse.

The findings of these studies indicate that mere access to education is insufficient; what is taught and how it is taught become equally significant. This directly informs the present study’s argument for integrating Dalit Studies into mainstream curricula.

3. Dalit Literature as Lived Experience and Counter-Narrative

Dalit literature acts as a powerful medium of resistance and self-representation. Works such as *Joothan* by Omprakash Valmiki and *Akkarmashi* by Sharan Kumar Limbale articulate the lived realities of caste-based discrimination while also asserting dignity and agency.

Unlike mainstream literary traditions, Dalit literature is not the depiction of suffering; it challenges social hierarchies and demands recognition. Movements such as the Dalit Panthers, associated with Namdeo Dhasal, further illustrate how literature and activism intersect to create social awareness.

Integrating Dalit texts into academic curriculum can impart onto the learners first-hand perspectives, thereby fostering empathy and critical engagement with social realities.



4. Education as a Medium for Inclusion and Transformation

Existing research consistently identifies education as a key for social mobility and empowerment. However, scholars state the presence of few structural limitations within the system. Studies show that caste-based discrimination persists in subtle forms, including classroom interactions, peer relationships, and institutional practices.

The concept of the “hidden curriculum” reveals how social hierarchies are manifested and propagated via the means of day-to-day regularities in educational institutions. This suggests that inclusion cannot be achieved through policy alone but requires pedagogical transformation.

The literature thus emphasizes the need for inclusive curriculum design, critical pedagogy, and teacher sensitization. These insights directly support the objectives of the present study, particularly in examining how Dalit Studies can be effectively integrated into education. Thus, the existing literature highlights the continued presence of caste-based inequalities in education and emphasizes the urgent need to incorporate Dalit perspectives into curricula, which forms the foundation of this study.

Discussion of Findings

Education is among the most vital pathways through which people possess the ability to bring positive change to society. Education has given the human world the thought of having a rational, logical, and scientific way of living in society. However, in India, access to education is not equitable. Certain communities have historically been excluded systematically from mainstream society, and caste, much like race in America, class in Britain, and factionalism in Italy (Bayly, op. cit.: 1), has served as a rigid system of social stratification. This directly highlights the contemporary relevance of Dalit Studies in addressing caste-based discrimination, as outlined in the first objective of this study.

Education is important for personal growth, but it is especially significant for empowering socially and economically disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). These communities were denied education for nearly 2000 years, which is why Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and other revolutionary leaders of India emphasized educational development as the key to their liberation. According to Ambedkar (1917), the caste system's defining feature is endogamy, which maintains a closed society where privileged groups hoard resources, including education, to sustain their dominance. This exclusionary practice historically ensured that education remained the preserve of the upper castes, further marginalizing disadvantaged communities. This supports the argument that education must be a part of a haven for inclusion rather than exclusion.

Focusing on the second objective, which examines how education can integrate Dalit narratives into mainstream discourse, it becomes evident that current curricula often fail to adequately represent marginalized voices. While access to education has improved, the content of education continues to reflect dominant perspectives. Dalit histories, literatures, and intellectual contributions remain underrepresented, limiting students' understanding of the realities of caste in India. Therefore, the integration of Dalit Studies into the academic framework is essential to create awareness, promote critical thinking, and move towards an inclusive academic environment.

Today, many students belonging to Scheduled Caste backgrounds have gained access to higher education institutions. However, caste-based discrimination persists, making their academic journeys fraught with challenges. Suresh (2016) highlights that casteism, or 'Brahminism,' operates as a mental construct that fosters feelings of superiority among certain groups, leading to widespread social injustices. Caste-based



violence and discrimination remain rampant, fueled by the lack of legal literacy among marginalized students. Many find it challenging to resist oppression due to being oblivious and unaware regarding their own rights. Legal literacy, therefore, emerges as a crucial component of education, equipping students with the knowledge to challenge systemic injustices.

At this point, it becomes necessary to clarify what is meant by Dalit Studies within the curriculum, which is central to understanding the third objective of this study. Firstly, Dalit Studies should not be restricted to a mere description of deprivation and historical oppression. While it is important to recognize the injustices faced by Dalit communities, an exclusive focus on suffering may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes and present Dalit identity in a limited manner.

Secondly, Dalit Studies must also include the achievements, agency, and intellectual contributions of Dalit individuals. The writings of authors such as Omprakash Valmiki and Sharan Kumar Limbale highlight not only the struggles but also the resilience and self-assertion of Dalit communities. Including such narratives allows students to engage with Dalit identity as dynamic and empowering, rather than solely defined by marginalization.

Thirdly, the mainstreaming of Dalit Studies within the curriculum is of critical importance. It should never be treated as an isolated or optional topic but rather integrated across disciplines such as history, literature, and political science. This requires inclusive pedagogical practices that encourage dialogue, critical reflection, and sensitivity towards issues of caste. Teacher training along with institutional support, is a prerequisite to ensure that such integration is meaningful and effective.

Ambedkar pointed out that societal development hinges on education. He argued that education dismantles biases, reduces exploitation, and empowers individuals to confront those who seek to dominate them. It reforms opinions, breaks down social barriers, and instills self-confidence which is true progress.

The intellectual class plays a role in shaping any society. The masses often look to this class for leadership and guidance. However, intellect alone does not guarantee virtue; its value depends on how it is used. While intellectuals can be forces for social good, they can also become defenders of self-interest. In our Indian subcontinent, individuals have been categorized to be under the umbrella of the Brahmin caste, which has been selfishly beneficial only to themselves and not towards the broader society. When examining Dalit Studies, this brings up important concerns regarding who controls knowledge production and how intellectual authority influences curriculum design.

Mere political representation cannot uplift the Depressed Classes. Their true progress depends on social and educational advancement. They must reject detrimental social habits, aspire for higher goals, and replace contentment with ambition. Fear must be overcome in order to ensure that they can own their rightful place in society.

Despite the constitutional provision under Article 17 of India abolishing caste discrimination, it continues to thrive within educational institutions. Education was envisioned as an instrument for bringing social change, by providing extra customized options relating to minority groups in the post-independence period. However, while numerous government schemes exist, their benefits often fail to reach those who need it the most, limiting the reach standard learning for marginalized communities.

A significant issue underlines the poor state of government-run schools, where a chunk of SC, ST, and OBC students are enrolled. Without strong foundational education, many struggle to pass crucial examinations such as the 10th-grade board exams, preventing them from progressing further. Although scholarships and



reserved seats exist at the higher education level, they remain inaccessible unless the foundational issues in initial classes and standards of academic institutions are resolved.

Several challenges persist in incorporating Dalit Studies within academic curricula, thereby addressing the third objective of the study. Although a growing number of learners from historically excluded communities have gained access to higher education, caste-based discrimination continues to shape their experiences. As studies suggest, caste operates not only as a social structure but also as a mindset, leading to subtle and overt forms of exclusion within educational institutions.

India's higher education institutions (HEIs) have expanded from 725 in 1947 to over 56,000 today, yet Dalit literacy rates remain at 66.1%, below the national average of 73%. While affirmative action policies provide some access to higher education, Dalit students continue to face economic, social, and cultural obstacles. Even after passing rigorous entrance exams, they experience discrimination from peers, faculty, and administrators. In prestigious institutions such as IITs, NITs, and central universities, caste identities are often inferred through JEE ranks, scholarship status, or even residential assignments, reinforcing systemic bias. Many Dalit students struggle with English, yet instead of receiving academic support, they are alienated, delayed in their progress, and subjected to derogatory labels such as 'quota walas' or 'sarkari damads,' further diminishing their confidence and sense of belonging.

Private higher education institutions (HEIs), which claim to be caste-neutral, also contribute to exclusion through subtle prejudices. While caste is not overtly discussed, microaggressions and social biases manifest in interactions, reinforcing discrimination. Dalit students frequently encounter administrative roadblocks, a lack of mentorship, and social isolation. Even Dalit faculty members face professional challenges, with their achievements often dismissed as undeserved. The resulting humiliation and bias push many Dalit students into self-segregation or withdrawal from campus life, leading to high dropout rates or, in extreme cases, suicides.

The recurring tragedy of Dalit student suicides in India's HEIs underscores the deep-seated caste-based discrimination within academia. From Rohith Vemula to Payal Tadvii and Darshan Solanki, the names may change, but the underlying issue remains unaddressed. Between 2014 and 2021, 122 student suicides were reported in IITs, NITs, and IIMs, with 68 belonging to reserved categories. Such figures go beyond data points – they stand as a sobering reflection of India's exclusionary academic structures. Meaningful reforms are imperative to foster an academic environment that is truly equitable, allowing education to function as an agent of genuine change rather than a continuation of entrenched disparities.

Regarding the fourth objective, which seeks to provide recommendations for enhancing the representation of Dalit perspectives in education, it becomes clear that structural and pedagogical changes are necessary. Curriculum design must move beyond token representation to include diverse Dalit voices across subjects. Representation in textbooks across disciplines should be initiated and not limited to history or sociology. Educational practices should promote critical engagement with issues of caste, encouraging students to question social hierarchies and develop empathy. Inclusive teaching methods must be incorporated with teacher sensitization and training programs. Additionally, institutional mechanisms must be strengthened to create safe and supportive environments for marginalized students.

Learning or the act of acquiring knowledge must be a medium of liberation, not an instrument of exclusion. If India is to progress as a truly democratic and just society, then it should ensure that every individual, regardless of caste, has unhindered and unbiased opportunity for quality education and opportunities for



growth. Only then can the earnest hope of leaders like Ambedkar be realized, leading to a society where caste no longer determines one's destiny.

The findings discussed in this study explain the value of Dalit Studies, highlight the part played by education representing marginalized communities, and identify the challenges involved in implementing these ideas within the curriculum.

Conclusion

Dalit Studies remains highly relevant in contemporary society, particularly in the domain of academia. By integrating Dalit perspectives into academic curricula, institutions can serve as a transformative force in creating a universal society along with a socially aware generation. This paper emphasizes the requirement for structural changes in education to make sure that Dalit voices are recognized and valued. Dealing with these barriers and implementing meaningful reforms can create a more equitable academic and social landscape.

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Relevance of Experiential Learning in School and Higher Education

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Abstract

Education functions as a transformative mechanism that equips individuals to contribute meaningfully to national development. In this context, experiential learning (EL) has emerged as a pedagogical paradigm that integrates cognitive, emotional, and environmental dimensions of learning to foster holistic development. Grounded in the philosophical traditions of Aristotle and Buddha and further theorized by Dewey, Piaget, Kolb, and others, EL emphasizes “learning by doing,” enabling learners to bridge theoretical concepts with real-world applications. The objectives include: (1) distinguishing between field visits and excursions, (2) identifying the need to integrate EL into curricula in alignment with NEP 2020, (3) analysing perceptions of students, teachers, and guardians regarding the acceptance and effectiveness of EL, and (4) recommending strategies to balance traditional classroom instruction with experiential activities to promote holistic growth. Employing a mixed-method design, the study combines extensive literature reviews and primary survey is conducted via Google Forms. Findings indicate a strong positive perception toward EL, highlighting its role in enhancing creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and socio-emotional competencies. The analysis also identifies potential challenges, emphasizing the crucial role of teachers as facilitators. The study advocates for a revival of India’s traditional experiential frameworks, such as the Gurukul system, complemented by contemporary pedagogical strategies. This integration can enable a transformative shift in Indian education, fostering lifelong learning and comprehensive human development.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, multi-disciplinary approach, social-emotional learning, flexible curriculum, emotional well-being, holistic development.*

Introduction

“If we want our children to move mountains, we first have to get them out of their chairs.”

~ Nicolette Sowder

Education and the learning procedure construct an individual to contribute in making a progressive and developing nation where the nature and quality of the education rendered serves as catalyst to the process. As the primary knowledge repertoire, schools followed by colleges and universities of the country take up the utmost responsibility of imparting and contributing towards holistic educational approach for each of the disciplines and sub-disciplines. Holistic education focusses on wholeness, philosophical orientations and pedagogical practices. It is concerned with life experiences, relates different aspects of individual rather than restricting itself with ‘narrowly defined basic skills’ (Mahmoudi et al., 2012).

Learning from and through experience is not something new rather roots from early times of Aristotle and Buddha. Theories of philosophical pragmatism (John Dewey), social psychology (Kurt Lewin), learning



during the process of learning (Carl Rogers), Montessori method (Maria Montessori), cognitive theory (Jean Piaget) emphasizes on experiential learning (Rani Komal, 2022). Piaget's concept (1973) supported the fact that, an individual's experience is transformed through an energetic process that enhances knowledge of events and development of the individual's creative abilities. Kolb (1984) again stated learning is "the process whereby knowledge is formed through the transformation of experience" (Rani Komal, 2022). The primary goal of site visit is to help students connect with process of science and arts in field ecology through relating classroom learnings with their observations in real space (Burt et al., 2012).

According to the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, experiential learning (EL) refers to the idea that knowledge develops through our continuous interaction and involvement with the world, making learning a natural outcome of experience. Unlike cognitive and behavioural theories, this approach is more holistic, as it recognises that learning is influenced by the entirety of our experiences, including our thoughts, emotions, and the surrounding environment. (UNESCO-UNIVOC, 2023).

National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 has made recommendations regarding various aspects of school and higher education levels in its reports, made lots of recommendations emphasizing on reconstruction of pedagogy and curriculum of the Indian system of education to meet the societal expectations of the 21st century. School education (Grade 1-12) must be enjoyable, holistic, and integrated in all sense and should be focussing on policy recommendations of pedagogical reforms to refrain from the prevalent culture of rote learning (Rani Komal, 2022).

It becomes necessary to understand ways to implement the recommendations as per NEP 2020 and also the problems that might be encountered. Perception about the acceptance and realisation of effectiveness of experiential learning amongst students enduring school and higher education should be taken into consideration. The impact can be analysed when an estimate on the number of educational institutes incorporating EL and their progress can be known.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is:

1. To understand the difference between field visits and excursions.
2. To identify the need for inclusion of EL (as per NEP 2020) into school curriculum and higher-level education with a multi-disciplinary approach.
3. To show a perception study regarding the acceptance and relevance of the EL approach amongst the students, teachers (school, college, university levels) and guardians.
4. To recommend ways to balance classroom studies and EL activities fostering holistic development approach.

Review of Literature

International literature reviews

WG Whitford (1923) in his work 'Brief History of Art Education in the United States' remarks in the post-war era the emphasis is rather on the practical than ever before and that the old method of learning was only wasting time on formal exercises without any objectives. These courses should be implemented with mental training, art thinking and judgement and art appreciation. Art work, construction, design, etc. are not special subjects instead very much integral to a well-organized curriculum in the public schools. "...A modern program of art education for the elementary school comprises a background of art appreciation...which will



equip him to meet the art problems of everyday life, and appreciate the beauties of nature to the fullest..." (Whitford, 1923).

Pat Hutchings tries to focus on the connection of experience and knowledge gain. He remarks, "...It is our contention that learning-- at the very least the kind of learning we expect in, college is active and involved and that, therefore, knowing and doing (or experience) must work together..." He asserts that knowing and doing must go hand-in-hand if learning has to occur mentioning Donald Schon's concept of the "reflective practitioner" or David Kolb's model of the "learning cycle" (Hutchings, 1935).

T.H. Broad explains the necessity of experience-centred curriculum that concerns individual. He argues that the generation is stuck in a 'paradoxical situation' where the need is to cater individual needs but teaching procedures are ultimately oriented towards group needs. Again, he mentions every individual learns through experience and it greatly matters - each child's overall set of experiences shaped by the school is unique, even though some of their learning may overlap with that of others. He also emphasizes on student interest where stress is put upon the importance of teaching methods in arousing interest of individual students as with a dearth of interest there is little learning (Broad, 1949).

N.L. Bossing's presentation on the trend towards the idea of core-curriculum reveals that this notion gained momentum via the emphasis of the to-be school curriculum by the Educational Policies Commission (1944). Here, experiential learning was stressed upon and curriculum was believed to centre experiences needed intending towards necessary behaviour competencies. With the aim of "learning experiences deemed necessary for all youth" an all-inclusive course, 'Common Learnings' (Core) was decided (Bossing & Bellack, 1956).

Hobgood explains the different modes of teaching as informational, practical, interpretative and critical and asserting that learning through experience is somewhat similar to the critical mode of teaching but claims it as the singular most efficient channel of instruction -the intention was not to introduce radical innovations, but to explore possibilities with a mindset focused on gradual and thoughtful reform rather than revolutionary change. It is identified as a 'learn by doing' approach where the student discovers oneself in a specific field on exposure to different stimuli leading to the offered understanding and can face 'sympathetic criticism' of the teacher (Hobgood, 1970).

Coleman (1977) has also supported experiential learning takes advantage of intrinsic motivation compared to information assimilation, Experiential learning features substantiation to abstract concepts, immediacy of application, exploitation of intrinsic motivation when compared to classroom learnings. Alongside, the development approach by Dewey and Piaget deals with the interaction of the person and nature and the resulting organisation of both cognitive and emotional patterns (Hamilton, 1980).

The necessity of outdoor experiences for educational purposes had been a matter of debate and characterises a rich history. The benefits of outdoor experience for the developing a healthy body and thereby, a healthy soul was advocated by Plato (1920). Arnold (1970) argues that children living in urban settings seldom have the opportunity to truly connect with the natural world. Instead, their sensory and emotional development is largely shaped through the objects and structures that surround them. Rhoades (1972) suggests that engagement with the natural environment can foster important qualities such as cooperation, clear thinking, planning, observation, resourcefulness, persistence, and adaptability. However, these qualities do not arise simply from the environment itself, but from the way educational programmes structure and encourage students' interaction with it. (Hattie et al., 1997).

*National literature reviews*

Post independent India had aimed at universalisation of education, to enable the right to education to every stratum of the society. Therefore, the main challenge of education system shifted to expansion of educational facilities which eventually led to a fall in the standards of the education system. To explain the nature of curriculum development that happened in the post-independent India, "...Curriculum in India at the school stage in general and the primary stage in particular is narrowly conceived and mechanically administered... The curriculum emphasises bookish knowledge, rote memory, cultivation of bits of information and is dominated by a stifling examination system both internal and external..." (Chaurasia & Kaul, 1967).

The reconstruction of the Indian education system undertook various recommendations, amongst which two important educational elements were mentioned. The first is the recreational and cultural interest of the youth (15-25 years) and secondly, their willingness, eagerness to participate in meaningful programs of nation building and social service (Naik, 1975).

The value of experience was emphasised in various fields of education, be it science, technology, geography, history, and many others. In context of medical education in India, Balachandra Adkoli remarks that in the traditional curricula, stress was put on acquisition of knowledge over development of skills. He advocated the importance of integrated education and similar concept of PBL (Problem-Based Learning). This approach aims at 'learning how to learn' and focus on self-directed learning as the central and pervasive objective of the teaching-learning process (Sood & Adkoli, 2000).

The concept of holistic education was emphasised by schools and colleges. Holistic education focusses on wholeness, philosophical orientations and pedagogical practices. It is concerned with life experiences, relates different aspects of individual rather than restricting itself with 'narrowly defined basic skills' (Mahmoudi et al., 2012).

It is important to trace the nature of learning and education system that has prevailed in India through ages. Practical wisdom was rooted in the Indian Spiritual tradition of Vedic learning. However, the influence of colonisation and increasing industrial and economic development of the country has removed the elements of spirituality from the contemporary education system. Vedic wisdom was viewed to foster ideas of integrating ethics, awareness, responsible behaviour through experiential learning, mentoring, spiritual discipline, cognitive learning, observation and reflection. The concept of transformational learning has been inherent to India and needs a revitalisation to bring practical wisdom to the Indian management education. Also, it was proposed amongst other that teaching environment could be both in and outside the classroom (Nandram, 2014).

Mention worthy, National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 has made recommendations regarding various aspects of school-level and higher education in its reports. School education (Grade 1-12) must be enjoyable, holistic, and integrated in all sense and should be focussing on policy recommendations of pedagogical reforms to refrain from the prevalent culture of rote learning (Rani Komal, 2022).

However, a change in the education system was remarkably noticed in the Medieval and British India. Medieval India education system mainly featured the ideals set up by the Mughal rulers and traditions, institutes (madrasa) were set up to impart values of Sufism and appreciate art in various forms. This was followed by the British rule in India where missionaries were set up throughout the country to impart education in English and prepare the upper strata of the society for administrative purposes useful for the British government (Taj, 2023).



Prof. Kamlesh Misra remarks that the now idea of experiential learning was initially introduced in the West and traced its way to universities worldwide, including India. But he claims this system was already in vogue in ancient India, the very familiar Gurukul system which was based on experiential learning and subjects like astronomy, philosophy, medicine, yoga, defence and many more were taught. Once the Guru decided that the student is capable of going to the real world and implement the knowledge, was allowed to go whereas relatively slow learners were retained and given time to learn (Misra, 2024).

Methodology

Based on the objectives chosen for the study, the information collected are both from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources mainly include a general survey via circulation of google forms amongst the participants and receiving relevant feedbacks. The third objective of the research is mainly addressed by this approach. The first, second and fourth objectives mainly are addressed by referring secondary sources of information like relevant information from over internet, books, articles, journals, etc. Also, the fourth (last) objective incorporates suggestions and opinion of the researcher. While addressing second, third and last objectives sometimes reference of opinions and perception of the participants might be referred as well (if required). The final chapter of conclusion will be based on an overall analysis of the separate findings or discussions of the objectives from the previous chapters. Software of Word Art has been used for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Objective 1: To understand the difference between field visits and excursions

“An excursion is a trip by a group of people, in this case for educational purposes. As a teaching format, it provides alternative learning strategies for students, adding variety that is necessary for both students and teachers...” (Excursion, n.d.).

Field trips are not merely a break from the routine of school; they play a vital role in a child's overall education. Such outings give students a valuable opportunity to experience and understand the world beyond the confines of textbooks and classrooms contributing to learning and personal growth in ways that conventional teaching cannot fully achieve. By sparking curiosity, increasing awareness of their surroundings, and teaching important life skills, field trips contribute meaningfully to a child's development. (How To Help Your Child Prepare For A Field Trip?, 2023).

The common grounds of both field visit and excursion are that they involve a shift from classroom environment to real-world setting. The learner learns to keep parity and draw connections between classroom rote knowledge base and that they observe during their visit. Duration of field trips and excursion may vary from a day to several days depending on the purpose and location of the visit. These involve certain important components of EL.

Although the concepts of excursion and field trips are used interchangeably very often, there exists a distinction between them. Field trips form the bigger domain of excursion. Field trips require more planning, preparedness and delve into more elaborate observation and hands-on experience as compared to excursion. Excursions may be field-based or may not like excursions to parks, museums, factory sites, etc. let learners experience and observe, sometimes require hands-on activities but not necessarily. But for field visits, the applicability of the theoretical knowledge base is more prominent, effective and hands-on activities are always a must for field activities. It involves spontaneous movements of the body, collecting relevant information, use of instruments (if any).



Objective 2: To identify the need for inclusion of EL (as per NEP 2020) into school curriculum and higher education with a multi-disciplinary approach

The traditional knowledge system leads to compartmentalization into various disciplines which leads to single disciplinary approach. This approach in the 21st century is inflicted with criticisms being ineffective and lacking potential to propose solutions to any domains of studies. This major drawback has paved the way and demand for a collaborative learning approach targeting holistic development of the learners of all ages and levels.

The New Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 has given importance to such approaches in higher and school education system where the main thrust area is liberal education with holistic and multidisciplinary approach. This is mainly intended to

- a) overcome learning difficulties,
- b) interconnect all sources of knowledge,
- c) Inquiry-based learning
- d) Flexible curriculum
- e) Credit-based courses
- f) community engagement
- g) environmental education
- h) Value-based education
- i) Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach

Coming to the importance of such multidisciplinary approach, it makes the learner approach a perceived problem or issue from varied perspectives with respect to a bunch of allied disciplines, providing a holistic approach to the issue.

To understand certain complex issues like the Mullaperiyar Dam dispute between Kerala and Tamil Nadu, it is necessary to examine them from multiple perspectives—historical, political, sociological, technological, and geographical. Similarly, studying a river requires an interdisciplinary approach - its geographical features, historical background, biological life, and representation in literature. (Exploring Disciplinary Approaches in NEP 2020: Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Models in HEIs, 2022).

Objective 3: To show a perception study about the acceptance and relevance of the EL approach amongst students and teachers (school, college, university levels) and guardians

Perception is regarded as a fuzzy concept, especially in psychological research. Traditionally, it refers to immediate products of sensory experience, via taste, hear, touch, etc. (Gleitman & Gross, 2010). In social psychology, the meaning shifts slightly, as perception refers to the later-stage process of forming and engaging with mental constructs of people (Phillips et al., 2014).

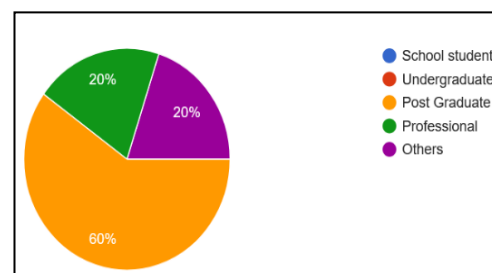
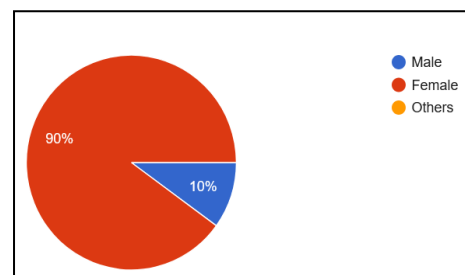
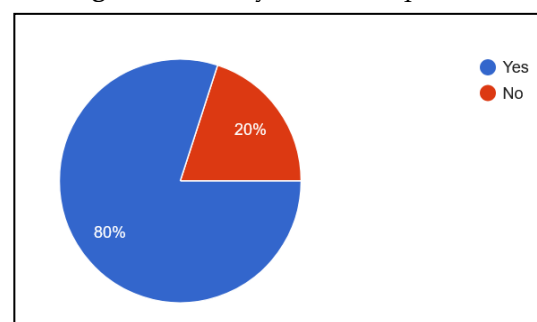


It is important not only lay recommendations on implementation of EL but also assess its acceptance amongst the common masses. Perception study via circulating google forms has been performed. Here, as seen in Fig.1, majority of respondents belong to the postgraduate level (60%) followed by people into professions (20%) and others (20%). Hence perception of mainly people engaged with higher levels of education and research are

emphasized here.

From the gender proportions of the participants in Fig.2, perception of females (90%) will have to be prioritized as compared to only 10% of male respondents.

80% of the respondents were familiar with the concept of EL (Fig.3) and almost 95% considered inclusion of EL into school and higher educational curriculum (Fig.4) with almost 90% definitely considers EL contributes to a learner's development (Fig.5). Majority of the participants (75%) considered EL results into holistic development of the learners (fig.6). Hence, a positive acceptance of inclusion of EL into the curriculum of education is observed among the participants.

Fig 1: Profession of respondents**Fig 2: Gender of respondents****Fig 3: Familiarity with concept of**

Source: Based on primary data
(02/01/2025)

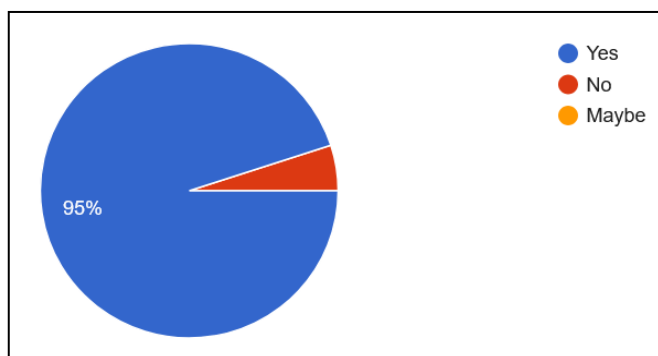
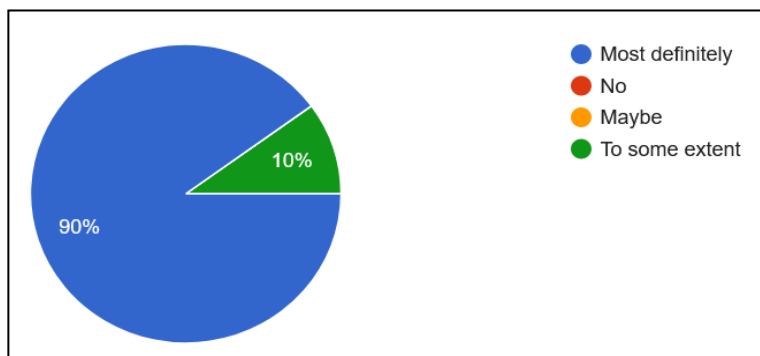
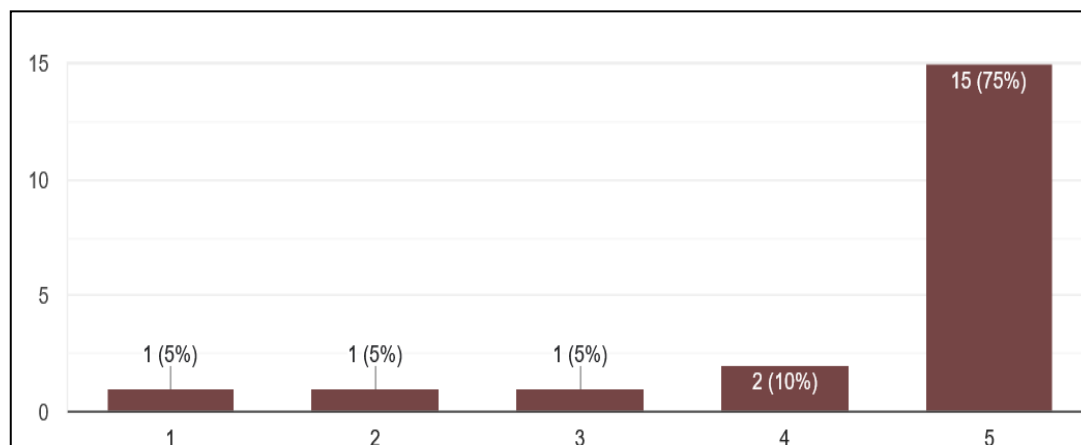
Fig 4: Consideration of inclusion of EL is essential in school/ higher educational curriculum**Fig 5: Perception of EL contributing to students' development**



Fig 6: Perception of EL towards holistic development of learners



Source: Based on primary data
(02/01/2025)

Perception about the positives of EL: Positive aspects of EL have are found amongst the assertive remarks of the participants, like-

1. '...Creativity, experience, critical thinking, confidence, teamwork.'
2. '...Practical application. Relevance of what is being studied. Better retention of content...'
3. '...Establish a relationship between theoretical studies and hands on experience...'
4. '...Instils motivation to perform good...'
5. '...Helps in exploring new interests which open up future employment opportunities
6. '...Increases awareness about surrounding (social, environmental etc) ...'
7. '...Experimental learning provides students with hands-on experience, developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. It fosters collaboration, builds confidence, and helps application of crude knowledge to real-world problems, preparing them for the workforce and lifelong learning...'
8. '...Relatability, Interest, Cooperation, Collaboration, Brainstorming...'
9. 'Confidence, public speaking' and 'self-interest about subject matter, Professional skill development...' and many more.

Perception study on EL leading to emotional, social, intellectual, physical development: The word cloud below has been prepared which clearly mentions the major thrust points perceived under the domains of contribution of EL on emotional, social, intellectual, and physical development of the learners.

Fig 7: Perception study on EL leading to (a) Emotional, (b) Social, (c) Intellectual, (d) Physical



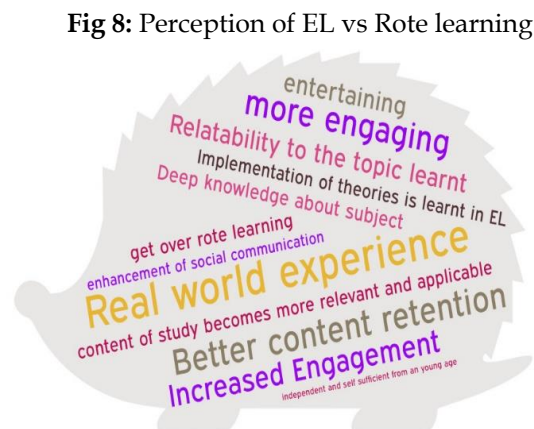
Perception about inclusion of EL should start at the school levels: The researcher has been identified

Students should be familiarised with real world problems and it's solutions from an early age
Students will find more interest in the school curriculum.
Children are fast learners and inculcating EL activities from school help them to diversify their attention.
Yes, I think implementation and inclusion of Experiential Learning (EL) should start at the school levels. This allows students to develop essential skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, from an early age.
Experiential Learning if taught from school will be useful for students at higher levels of studies and over all in life. Whether you study or you work, your idea of experiential learning will help you in all obstacles
It must be included in the curriculum
since class can become monotonous at times hence implementing experiential learning like lab work even will boost their energy, as young children love to participate in anything out of box experience that can also become learning.
Yes, Especially when students enter adolescence because they have mental ability, curious about new things and learn from the experience, they have strong memory. They can start critical thinking at this stage.
Supports all student regardless of their abilities, disabilities or learning style. EL involves hands-on-activities and reflection to help students connect classroom knowledge to real world situation.
Should start basics from the very initial stages of learning.
Kids learn easily. Cultural acceptance and application of knowledge is better grasped at a younger age
Learning through experience if starts from early childhood leads to in-depth understanding of concepts also infuse values required for the later years of life.
The implementation and inclusion of EL should start at school level because the students should be able to understand the topics from the grassroot level and this will increase their inquisitiveness of knowledge

producing assertive remarks like- and many more...

EL vs Rote Learning: Rote learning restricts the openness of learning and the joyfulness of the process with lack of lucidity and expression which is reciprocated by the virtues of EL as also seen from the perception study. The plus points of EL over rote learning is expressed via the word cloud (Fig.8).

Despite the virtues of EL as perceived by the participants, the researcher finds there might be some risk and uncertainties present concerning EL which has led to the conclusion as discussed below.



Source: Based on primary data
(02/01/2025)

Risk Factor of EL: An analysis of perception regarding the possibility of risk factor involved around 70% of respondents perceiving chances of risk definitely for sure or occasionally and the rest 30% supporting zero to some chances of risk involved. The reason for risk affirmation involve opinions as shown via the word cloud (Fig. 9(b)).

Fig 9(a): Perception of EL involving risk for learners

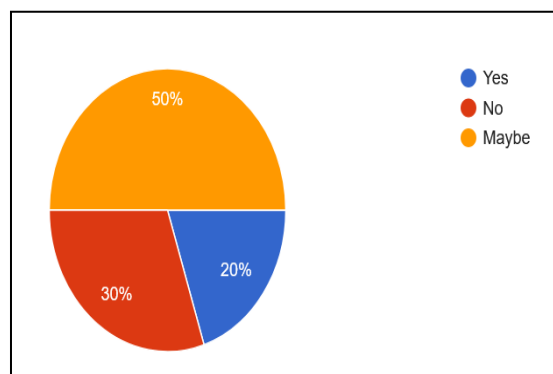
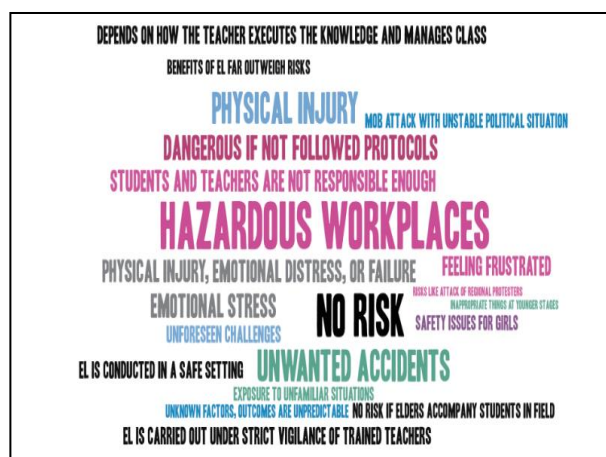


Fig 9(b): Perception of EL involving risk for learners



Role of teachers in facilitating EL: The probabilities of the risks perceived do provide basis for the importance of the role of teachers as facilitators and they can definitely contribute in the ways as perceived and proposed by the participants, shown hereby.

Fig 10: Perception regarding role of teachers





Objective 4: To recommend ways to balance classroom studies and EL activities fostering holistic development approach

Devangana Thakuria, while discussing holistic development, uses a simple analogy: if one concentrates only on perfecting the main course and ignore the side dishes and dessert, the meal may be good, but it will still feel incomplete and less satisfying. In the same way, when education prioritises only academic success, it tends to neglect emotional, social, and physical growth. Consequently, students may perform well in studies but lack essential life skills needed for overall development (Thakuria, 2024).

Considering a heterogenous classroom situation where learners with different capacities of learning gather, it is essential to incorporate classroom rote learning with co-curricular activities and infuse the elements of EL into the system. Students often face anxiety issues and psychological and intellectual as well as social hurdles during their preliminary years of growing, hence it pertains to the duty of a teacher to ensure holistic development of the child. Therefore, a balance needs to be implemented and can be observed in the following ways:

- a) Spiritual development of learners with incorporation of meditation, yoga classes, music therapy sessions, art therapy sessions, learning new instruments, counselling, etc. not only diverts the learners from rote learning situation but allows self-enrichment and fosters self-healing.
- b) Physical development can happen through participation in games like various sports, table tennis, swimming clubs, physical education/training etc. Also, additional courses like martial arts as skill enhancement programs must be ensured for the students which focus on their discipline, enhance self-esteem, concentration and sense of surroundings.
- c) Emotional development via conducting community service programs, participating in environmental and youth campaigns, is almost a practical implementation of their learnings from value education classes.
- d) Intellectual development happens through observation of debate sessions, inter-school competitions, brainstorming for global issues, or through skills like chess, learning abacus, machine language and basic coding.
- e) Creative arts session like painting, crafts, story-telling sessions, etc, also engages students to express creativity and experiences.
- f) Field visits, excursions to museums, parks fosters learning of theoretical knowledge about events and practicalizing them as real-world phenomena.
- g) Sense of responsibility comes with observance of social service weeks which not only promises values of compassion, visit to disability centres like schools for blind children and the disabled incorporates virtues of empathy but also modesty and humility.

Conclusion

The concept of Experiential Learning even though has been emphasized in the recent times, is not new to the Indian system of education as it traces back its roots to the ancient Gurukul system of education. When hands-on experiences complement classroom teaching, they promote social-emotional learning (SEL), which helps students understand and manage their emotions, develop empathy, and build healthy relationships.

Recommendations

Series of colonisation has severed the link to our enriched traditional system of learning and have established the concept of rigid learning system and unhealthy 'rat race' of the Indian education system. This modification needs ready attention, however will not be reverted back to its former glory unless strict implementation of regulations and policies and collective effort of the stakeholders of the education system –



be it the teachers, students or guardians. Virtues of experiential learning therefore will definitely help the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual nourishment required to feed the young minds of the nation.

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

~ Swami Vivekananda

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Women in Leadership: Breaking the Barriers from Andarmahal to Public Leadership Roles

Sanandita Dey, Dr. Suparna Ghosh

Abstract

This paper examines the remarkable journey of women in India as they transition from the private, often secluded space of the andarmahal to active roles in public leadership and decision-making. By tracing historical milestones—including reform movements, the independence struggle, and the expansion of educational opportunities—the study reveals how women have continuously challenged and negotiated traditional gender barriers. Drawing from both historical context and contemporary examples, it highlights persistent inequalities while underscoring the resilience and agency of women across generations. The analysis demonstrates that women's leadership in India is an evolving, collective process shaped by determination and societal change. Ultimately, the study calls for supportive systems and inclusive policies to further empower women and ensure their equal participation in all spheres of public life.

Keywords: *Andarmahal, Women's Leadership, Gender Inequality, Empowerment, Education, Social Change, Public Participation.*

Introduction

The story of India's freedom struggle remains incomplete without acknowledging the significant yet often overlooked contributions made by women. This paper explores how women's roles evolved during this period and how their involvement not only supported the national struggle but also transformed their own social positions.

Women did not remain silent spectators. They actively participated in protests, built networks, spread nationalist ideas, and contributed to mass movements. Initially, their participation was restricted due to limited access to education and public life. Over time, however, awareness increased, and women from both urban and rural areas began to engage more actively.

Their movement into public spaces marked a significant shift. Stepping beyond traditional domestic roles, women began to assert themselves in social and political spheres. This transition—from dependence to agency—was gradual and required sustained effort. Today, women's growing presence in fields such as politics, science, sports, and business reflects both progress and the continued struggle for equality.

Need of the study

This paper tries to explore the transformation of women's roles in Indian history, particularly the shift from the private domain (andarmahal) to the public sphere (bahirmahal). Although this transition is widely acknowledged, there is a limited detailed understanding of how it unfolded across different time periods and social contexts.

Focusing on Indian women, with some reference to eastern India (women from Bengal), the study explores how access to education, employment, and political participation has evolved. It also examines how



enduring social structures such as patriarchy, caste hierarchy, and economic inequality continue to shape women's experiences despite visible progress.

By connecting historical developments with present realities, especially women's participation in the workforce and public life, the study aims to highlight both continuity and change. It aims to contribute to academic discussions and also policy thinking that promotes inclusive empowerment.

Review of literature

Studies on women's status in India have repeatedly highlighted how history, culture, and social structures have influenced gender expectations and identities. Early analyses argue that women's marginalization was deeply embedded within patriarchal systems that restricted their access to education, mobility, and participation in public life (Sarkar, 2001). The domestic sphere, often described as the *andarmahal*, functioned not only as a living space but also a social barrier that strengthened position in society. (Chatterjee, 1993).

During the 19th century, several social reform movements emerged to oppose customs like child marriage and supported women's education. These efforts created initial opportunities, though their benefits were mostly limited to certain social groups. (Forbes, 1996; Kumar, 1993).

With increased access to education, women gradually began to articulate their own experiences and question established social norms. This shift led to greater participation in reformist and educational initiatives, reflecting a transition from passive acceptance to active engagement (Forbes, 1996).

The freedom movement created new opportunities for women to step into public and political spaces. Yet, this participation did not necessarily bring lasting social change, as patriarchal attitudes continued to dominate the society. Cultural and ideological narratives were often used to legitimize women's participation, framing it within acceptable notions of femininity (Roy, 2012; Chatterjee, 1993). However, this inclusion was not always accompanied by long-term structural transformation, as patriarchal norms persisted. (Sarkar, 2001).

Post-independence literature shifted focus toward institutional developments and policy interventions-attention shifted to legal reforms and policies aimed at equality. Although laws improved women's rights, a gap between legal provisions and actual experiences persisted (Bagchi, 1995).

Recent research highlights the importance of intersectionality, showing how caste, class, and region influence women's opportunities. There is also increasing focus on the role of education, employment, and digital platforms in shaping women's empowerment.

Despite the expansion of research in this field, a gap remains in connecting historical developments with contemporary lived experiences across generations. Much of the existing literature focuses either on specific historical phases or on present-day issues in isolation. This study attempts to bridge that gap by integrating intergenerational perspectives with broader scholarly discussions, offering a more comprehensive understanding of women's evolving roles in Indian society.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach to understand the shift in women's roles from the private to the public sphere. The study focuses on Indian women taken from participants in urban and semi-urban contexts.



A total of 20 participants were selected to represent different generations and socio-economic backgrounds. The participants were from various age groups: 20–30, 40–60, and 70–80. Domestic workers were also included to ensure representation of economically disadvantaged groups.

Basic demographic details such as age, education, occupation, and marital status were considered to understand variations in experience. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share personal narratives related to education, work, family expectations, and social mobility.

The study also refers to selected academic works for context, though the primary focus remains on lived experiences. Data was analysed thematically to identify patterns, generational differences, and key areas of change.

Results and Discussion

The study reveals that women's participation in public life evolved slowly, influenced by multiple social and economic factors. Clear generational differences can be observed.

Women belonging to the 70–80 age group recalled a time when their responsibilities and lives were largely limited to domestic spaces. Limited access to education and strict social control defined their experiences. However, some recalled early influences of reform movements and the freedom struggle, indicating the beginnings of change.

The 40–60 age group represents a transitional phase. Many gained access to education and employment, reflecting increased independence. They too faced persistent challenges such as workplace discrimination and the burden of balancing domestic and professional responsibilities.

The experiences of domestic workers highlight the impact of economic conditions. For many, limited education, early marriage, and financial dependence continue to restrict opportunities, showing that progress is not equally distributed.

Younger women (20–30) expressed greater confidence in accessing education and careers. Digital platforms were seen as important tools for awareness and opportunity. However, issues such as wage inequality, limited leadership roles, and societal expectations remain significant concerns.

Overall, the findings show that while women's roles have expanded, the process is ongoing and shaped by intersecting factors such as class, access to resources, and social norms.

Conclusion

The study shows that women in India have moved from restricted domestic roles to greater participation in public life. However, this transformation is neither linear nor complete. While legal reforms and educational opportunities have opened new pathways, deeply rooted social norms continue to influence everyday experiences.

At the same time, women's increasing presence in different fields reflects growing confidence and independence. True empowerment involves not only access to opportunities but also the freedom to make choices within one's social environment.



Recommendations

Henceforth, research should adopt a more clearly defined scope and include a larger, more diverse sample to capture wider differences in women's experiences. Greater emphasis should be placed on differences related to class, education, and location.

Government initiatives should prioritize better educational opportunities, vocational training, and digital accessibility, particularly for women belonging to marginalized communities. Workplaces should implement stronger measures to ensure equal pay, prevent harassment, and support work-life balance.

Encouraging women's participation in leadership requires both institutional support and broader social change. Community-level awareness programs can help challenge restrictive norms. Future research should make use of recent and diverse references in order to provide a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the subject.

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The Burden of Blame on Women: A Gendered Gaze into Infertility

Shaheli Das, Dr. Suparna Ghosh

Abstract

This study examines the gender biases that unfairly blame women for infertility, even when male factors are the primary issue. We used in-depth case studies to examine how patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes in India maintain this unfair blame on women while neglecting discussions about male reproductive health problems. Our findings show a complex set of emotional, social, and cultural penalties that women face, especially when male sexual dysfunction causes childlessness in couples. This study highlights the urgent need for gender-sensitive methods in discussions and interventions related to reproductive health.

Introduction

Infertility is a widely misunderstood and socially stigmatized health issue that is deeply affected by gender. Patriarchal norms often place the responsibility for reproductive outcomes on women, even when male sexual dysfunction, such as erectile dysfunction or infertility, is the primary cause. Infertility impacts millions of couples across the world, with prevalence rates reaching nearly 30% in developing nations. In societies like India, which value childbirth and uphold patriarchal ideals, being childless brings severe social consequences, primarily for women. Although medical evidence shows that approximately 40% of infertility cases are due to male factors, society continues to see women as the main culprits for reproductive failure. This misattribution not only diminishes the pain women experience but also supports toxic masculinity by discouraging men from taking accountability for their reproductive health concerns.

In India, the stigma surrounding childlessness is rooted in strong gender norms that define women primarily by their ability to have children. For women, being a mother is not just about biology; it is a social expectation that affects their value, security, and status in both the family and community. In contrast, male infertility is rarely discussed publicly, shielded by cultural taboos linking masculinity with virility. This unfair allocation of blame creates a culture of suffering among women that is not adequately addressed in healthcare or social policy.

Need For the Study

This study is necessary because there is a significant gap in public and intellectual discussion about gender and infertility in patrilineal cultures such as India. Though men and women share an equal burden for infertile relationships, the responsibility for blame and penalty disproportionately lies with ladies even if man factors like erectile dysfunction share the responsibility. Social taboos along with fixed conceptions of manliness keep male infertility concealed even if medical facts indicate it contributes towards nearly half of the cases. This disconnect between medical facts and societal beliefs reinforces harmful gender roles, leading to emotional distress, social isolation, and marital strain for women. Reproductive health services and policies often overlook these gendered impacts, resulting in ineffective and insensitive interventions.

By exploring the unspoken struggles experienced by women affected by male infertility, this current study aims towards encouraging gender-sensitive healthcare and breaking the deep-seated stigma, encouraging mutual responsibility in reproductive health.



Objective

This study aims to explore how patriarchal ideas consistently hold women answerable for not having children, even when male impotence is confirmed. We examined the various impacts on women's mental health, social status, and marital stability. Through detailed case studies, we illustrate women's experiences of dealing with this unfair treatment, emphasizing how female blame is normalized and maintained across different social settings.

Literature Review

1. The Social Construction of Infertility in India

In India, childlessness is often seen not just as a medical issue but as a serious social failure that reflects a woman's value and identity. Early studies, such as Unisa's (1999) research in rural Andhra Pradesh, showed the heavy stigma women face regarding infertility. Even when infertility is not their fault, these women experience intense family pressure, social exclusion, and, at times, abandonment. Unisa's foundational work highlights that women often endure repeated and invasive treatments, whereas men rarely undergo tests. This disparity leads to significant psychological distress, including depression and social withdrawal. The research shows that a woman's value within her family is often strongly connected to her capacity to bear children. (Unisa, 1999).

Bharadwaj's (2003) ethnographic study reinforces this societal view, showing why adoption is often rejected in India. She identified that infertility extends beyond being merely a medical condition; it shapes a woman's social identity, especially in traditional families. The expectation of having biological children frequently leads couples experiencing infertility to overlook adoption as a possible alternative. Bharadwaj's research also notes that donor insemination is often kept secret because of male pride. Women are expected to protect their husbands' reputations by hiding any male infertility issues, including erectile dysfunction. A strong cultural emphasis on lineage, caste purity, and bloodlines further deepens resistance to other family building choices. This reveals how patriarchal values and biological expectations burden women with the task of maintaining family honor and secrecy, even in cases of male infertility (Bharadwaj 2003).

2. Gender Disparities in Attribution of Blame and the Silenced Reality of Male Infertility

The existing study shows a clear gender bias in assigning blame for infertility, where male infertility is frequently being ignored or concealed. Research conducted in culturally comparable regions like Pakistan suggests that men view fertility tests as a threat to their masculinity. They often fear being diagnosed with male infertility, leading people to more readily assume that the woman is responsible for the couple's inability to conceive (Mumtaz et al., 2013). This unwillingness to recognize male infertility highlights the broader societal structures that prioritize male identity and status over medical facts.

Despite the growing evidence of male factor infertility, cultural taboos surrounding male reproductive health remain strong (ART Fertility Clinics, 2023). Inhorn and Patrizio's (2015) global review of infertility revealed that conditions such as erectile dysfunction and other male infertility issues are heavily stigmatized and hidden in Middle Eastern and South Asian societies. They describe "masculinity maintenance" behaviors, where men refuse to seek testing or share their conditions. This reinforces how assisted reproductive technologies mostly target women, often neglecting to hold men accountable for reproductive issues (Inhorn and Patrizio 2015).



Dudgeon and Inhorn (2004) delve into how men significantly affect women's health outcomes, especially in reproductive matters. Their research conducted across various regions, including India, identifies a widespread "masculine silence" regarding sexual and reproductive health, including erectile dysfunction. This silence creates a heavy emotional burden for women, who are often expected to feel pressured in order to protect and maintain the perception of male virility. The authors argue for a more gender-balanced approach to reproductive healthcare, stressing that protecting male status often takes priority over medical truth or justice for women (Dudgeon & Inhorn, 2004). This body of work shows that when male factor infertility is acknowledged, it usually does not carry the same harsh social consequences as female infertility does. While childless women often face abuse, exclusion, and potential abandonment, men typically experience minor social repercussions, highlighting a significant gender gap in how infertility affects social standing and personal security (Mumtaz et al., 2013, as cited in the abstract).

3. Medical Practices and Gender Bias

Research indicates a significant gender bias in medical practices regarding infertility treatment. Clinical protocols often begin with invasive testing in women, despite the simplicity of assessing fertility in men. Women commonly report undergoing painful and costly treatments, whereas their male partners often resist even basic diagnostic tests (Dudgeon & Inhorn, 2004; Unisa, 1999). This focus on medicalizing female bodies, with male bodies largely overlooked, mirrors the broader patterns of gender inequality in reproductive healthcare. This consistent issue across various studies highlights a systemic problem in which societal norms lead the medical system to place the burden of investigation and treatment disproportionately on women.

Data Collection Method

The information for this case study were gathered using a qualitative observational research method. This involved studying the social behavior and cultural attitudes surrounding a woman who was held responsible for infertility. Instead of directly interviewing the woman or family members involved, the study used an "observing the observant" technique—gathering insights from a close observer, a neighbor, who had witnessed the situation over time. This indirect method helped reduce bias and encouraged candid responses by maintaining a comfortable distance from the core participants.

A semi-structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool. It included both closed-ended questions (e.g., age, occupation, relationship to the woman) and open-ended questions that encouraged detailed responses regarding social reactions, family dynamics, and gender stereotypes surrounding infertility. The flexibility of the questionnaire struck a synchronization balance between the researcher, micro systematically allowing us to share deep, reflective insights while still keeping the-structured for analysis.

The key respondent in this case was a female neighbor, a graduate and homemaker living in an urban locality. Her close proximity to the woman in question, combined with her education and observational perspective, this made her a suitable for understanding community's attitudes and behavior towards the woman blamed for childlessness. Ethical considerations included ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of both the respondent and the woman described in the case study.

Case Study Presentation

The study is based around a married woman from an urban middle-class background who, despite not being clinically infertile, faced social and emotional hardship because she was unable to conceive. As soon as suspicions of infertility arose, the woman underwent multiple medical checkups. Even after her medical test



results showed no abnormalities, the pressure did not stop; instead, she was encouraged to continue undergoing rituals and religious visits to seek divine help. These repeated intrusions stemmed from the assumption that women were solely responsible for a couple's childlessness.

The husband refused to undergo any medical examination. His behaviour became increasingly distant and unsupportive. Over time, he engaged in extramarital affairs and began consuming alcohol regularly. Despite this, women remained the primary target of blame. The husband's family also took a rigid stance against her, excluding her from family events and rituals, and gradually reducing her role and status in the household. This woman's lived experience, as reported by the observer, forms the heart of this real-life case study.

The respondent observed that people in the community rarely questioned the man's role in the situation, even among educated individuals. This silence stems from the deeply embedded cultural notion that male infertility is shameful and emasculating, making it a taboo topic. The respondent noted that in patriarchal societies, "When people aren't aware about such issues it usually plays the other as target to play the blame game," with women being the convenient scapegoats.

Detailed Case Study and Analysis

- **Societal Construction of Blame and Female Responsibility**

The case study reveals how blame is systematically constructed and imposed on women through various social mechanisms. The community's initial reaction of suspicion toward the woman, rather than the couple, demonstrates how infertility is gendered from the outset.

The persistent pressure on the woman to undergo repeated medical testing despite confirmation of her fertility illustrates what might be termed a "blame persistence" phenomenon, where the cultural narrative of female guilt worthy is so powerful that contrary evidence is dismissed or minimized.

- **Gender Stereotyping**

This case strongly demonstrates the deep-rooted nature of gender stereotypes and their influence on societal responses to infertility. In patriarchal cultures, fertility and motherhood are often perceived as women's primary identities. When pregnancy does not happen, the blame is instinctively placed on the woman, regardless of scientific or medical evidence. The man's role is not questioned. The case study respondent noted that even though the woman had medical reports proving her fertility, the family continued to treat her as being at fault. This reflects how cultural assumptions overpower logic, reinforcing a biased narrative that holds women responsible for reproductive problems.

- **The Asymmetry of Medical Intervention and Testing**

This case study highlights a striking asymmetry in medical testing and intervention. While the woman was subjected to multiple examinations at various clinics, her husband refused testing altogether. This asymmetry extends beyond diagnosis to treatment, with women bearing the physical and emotional burdens of fertility interventions, irrespective of the underlying cause. The patient in this case was forced to seek religious remedies and undergo repeated medical examinations.



- **Social Penalties and Exclusionary Practices**

The exclusion of women from auspicious rituals and family functions represents a form of social punishment that reinforces their devalued status. This practice of ritual exclusion is particularly significant in context of India, where participation in religious and cultural ceremonies signals social acceptance and a sense of belonging. The respondent noted that the woman "was segregated from taking part in any auspicious rituals or functions" and "treated as not lucky for such activities," demonstrating how infertility transforms women's public identity and relational possibilities.

- **In-Law Relations and Family Power Dynamics**

This analysis discusses how in-laws, especially mothers-in-law, significantly contribute to shaping and reinforcing the narrative of blame. From "the initial day," the in-laws blamed the woman and created an environment of hostility toward her. The power differentials within the household enabled this blame to translate into concrete impositions on the woman's life, including the forced responsibility of raising her brother-in-law's children—a painful reminder of her childlessness and a practical manifestation of her diminished status within the family hierarchy. This arrangement simultaneously reinforced her identity as a caretaker while denying her the social recognition and emotional fulfilment of motherhood.

- **Male Sexual Behaviour and Double Standards**

The husband's response to the situation—engaging in extramarital affairs "openly and with absolute impunity"—highlights the unequal gender expectations surrounding the effects of childlessness. While the woman faced continuous blame and social penalties, the husband's infidelity was tolerated and even tacitly endorsed by his family as a justifiable response to childlessness.

The husband's sexual behaviour illustrates how male reproductive sexuality is privileged over female well-being. His extramarital affairs were framed as a legitimate exercise of masculine sexuality in response to his wife's perceived inadequacy, rather than as a betrayal of marital commitment or a potential health risk to his wife. This privileging of male sexual expression over female dignity and safety represents a broader pattern of gender inequity in sexuality governance.

- **Role of Education and Patriarchal Conditioning**

Interestingly, the people involved in this case, including the husband, were educated and from urban backgrounds. This reveals that formal education alone does not guarantee progressive thought. Deep-seated patriarchal beliefs continue to shape people's attitudes and behaviors, regardless of their academic credentials. This case demonstrates how patriarchal conditioning—lifelong reinforcement of gender roles and biases—can overshadow education. Therefore, education must be accompanied by gender sensitivity training and value-based learning to challenge these entrenched norms.

- **Cultural Silencing of Male Infertility**

Perhaps the most striking finding was the persistent unwillingness to recognize the possibility of male infertility despite medical evidence suggesting impotence. The respondent observed that people "never considered it as a fault even when they are themselves educated" because "there is no awareness about such issues among the public." This cultural silencing reflects the deep-seated taboos surrounding male reproductive capacity and its connection to masculine identity. The respondent's explanation that in patriarchal societies, "it usually plays the other target to play the blame game" succinctly captures how blame



functions as a displacement mechanism that protects male status at the expense of female well-being. This displacement is not merely interpersonal but institutional, embedded in medical practices, family structures, and community responses that systematically direct scrutiny toward women while shielding men.

Recommendations

- **Awareness Campaigns**

Open and honest conversations should be started in communities through storytelling, public talks, and awareness drives. When people hear real stories—of both women and men—they begin to understand that infertility is not a shameful secret, and it certainly is not just a woman's burden.

- **Sexual and Reproductive Education**

It is important to educate young minds with essential knowledge from an early stage, making them aware about reproductive health in a balanced and inclusive way. Only then can future generations grow up free from myths and gender-based assumptions surrounding infertility.

- **Counselling Services**

Infertility has a profound emotional impact. Couples need access to safe, supportive environment where emotional experiences may be shared and guidance can be received without judgment, fears, and work through the journey together—not in blame or isolation but with compassion and understanding.

- **Media Sensitization**

Media plays the most important and an influential role in shaping public perceptions and societal norms. Through the telling of compelling and empathetic stories—in films, documentaries, social media drives, and commercials—that evoke the emotional struggles and individual realities of male infertility, we can start breaking down problematic stereotypes, defying antiquated notions of what it means to be man enough, and altering public perceptions to become more understanding, empathetic, and supportive.

- **Cultural Reform**

Many traditions place the entire weight of childlessness on women, leading them to undergo rituals and to bear guilt alone. It is time to gently but firmly question these practices and work toward faith and cultural values that support women, not punish them.

- **Legal and Policy Reforms**

The law should reflect this fairness. Policies should require fertility testing for both partners while also safeguarding women from discrimination or mistreatment due to childlessness. Policies must ensure that both partners undergo testing and that women are protected from discrimination or abuse simply because they have not had children. Justice must be written into the system.

- **Training for Healthcare Providers**

Doctors and nurses often serve as the initial source of support for patients, playing a significant role in assessing their needs, offering immediate attention, and walking them through the healthcare process. They



must be trained not just in medicine but also in empathy so that they do not unknowingly reinforce bias by assuming the problem lies with the woman.

- **Male Involvement Programs**

Men often stay silent in infertility conversations –but silence does not help healing. Programs that actively engage men in reproductive health decisions can break the stigma and encourage shared responsibility on the journey to parenthood.

- **Support Groups and Peer Networks**

No one should feel alone in this regard. Creating spaces –whether in person or online –where couples can talk to others facing the same challenges can bring healing, hope, and a sense of solidarity that is deeply needed.

Conclusion

This case study highlights the silent struggles many women endure when infertility becomes a battleground for blame. Despite the reality of her husband's impotence, the woman in this case was subjected to repeated medical tests, social isolation, and emotional distress. She was excluded from family rituals, burdened with guilt, and forced to carry the emotional weight of a situation she did not create. Meanwhile, her husband remained shielded from medical scrutiny and accountability. These are not just unfortunate exceptions; they are symptoms of a deeply rooted patriarchal system that values male pride over female dignity. The real issue we face isn't necessarily about being misled or uninformed but more about power being exercised and maintained at times at the expense of truth, fairness, and progress. As long as male infertility remains a taboo and women are expected to silently absorb blame, real justice remains unattainable. We must rethink how we understand and respond to infertility –not as a woman's failure but as a shared human experience. Only through open conversations, inclusive healthcare, family counselling, and legal protections can we begin to create a world where women are no longer punished for the truths society refuses to face.

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Analysis of Media Consumption Pattern to Determine Student's Knowledge Sharing and Media Literacy: Case Study on College Students

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of the Internet and information and communication technologies has contributed to the widespread expansion of social networking sites (SNS) and social media, transforming global communication and information access. Social media enables users to generate, share, and engage with content, bridging geographical and cultural boundaries. The burgeoning engagement of students with it has given rise to concerns regarding its potential impact on academic performance and the sharing of knowledge. Consequently, media literacy has emerged as an indispensable competency for adeptly navigating the intricacies of the digital world effectively. This study investigates the media consumption patterns of students, their knowledge-sharing behaviour, and media literacy awareness. It addresses the gap in understanding how psychological factors, platform choices, and usage trends influence students' intellectual and academic development, while also identifying challenges such as distraction, privacy vulnerability, and addiction.

The study adopted a descriptive survey approach, drawing on primary data collected from 53 respondents (aged 12–43 years) through a systematically designed online questionnaire. The study analyzed demographic variables, social media usage, media content types, knowledge-sharing behaviour, and media literacy competencies. Quantitative and qualitative analyses, including graphical representations and Likert-scale assessments, were used to interpret the findings. An analysis of the target group's responses reveals a marked popularity of media literacy concepts and the use of such tools, especially among individuals aged 23 to 25, as reflected in their level of awareness. This period is a transitional stage between adolescence and full adulthood, with individuals still exploring their identity and life paths. They are also sensible about the consequence of overuse and have understood the complications related to media backwardness, though a few exceptional cases are existing but the change has already started and works towards the better. The study therefore considers social media use to have both positive and negative effects on students' knowledge sharing and media literacy performance.

Keywords: Media literacy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Communication, Socialization, Knowledge.

Introduction

The evolution of Internet led to the existence of social networking sites (SNS), as an offshoot of the advancement in Information systems and networking technologies has further promoted the transformation of the whole world into a global village in terms of information transmission and accessibility, which is also the major contributor in the world of communication. Over the years, these SNS started attracting over 2/3rd of Internet population for communication purpose. These SNS are known as social media (Boyd & Ellison,



2007). Social media in today's era are the best communication medium and play a vital role for users to create content, share content, join discussion forums, bookmark and curate content, share feedback and conduct economic activities. Social media is generally defined as being "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Thus, the advancement of technology—particularly digital and mobile innovations—has enabled social media to play a vital role in transcending boundaries, allowing individuals to connect, share, and interact with diverse communities on a common platform. Advancements in technology have led to the rise of social media, prompting growing scepticism regarding its influence on academic pursuits. With increasing mediums for communication, large-scale interaction has become easier than ever before, leading to the emergence of a new media age in which interactivity occupies a central role in media functions. The affordability and widespread availability of modern technology have significantly expanded media consumption choices. Rather than relying on a limited number of news outlets, information now can be accessed by individuals from multiple sources and engage in dialogues with others through online forums about the content they encounter.

The availability of multiple media has exposed an average person to media "grip effects" which implies that an average person today consumes media contents as though living depends on it. This further increased with the popularity of mobile phones and the internet. This led Oso (2015) to observe that the audience's world is increasingly shaped by emerging information and communication technologies, whose arrival has brought significant changes in the way people live and carry out various activities in their daily lives.

Mass media have been said to be full of manipulative, make-believe, strict information selection, deliberate editing and enhancers in order to achieve certain premeditated objectives, and especially to make profits, or wield influence (Bahramian, Mazaheri, 2018). In its simplest form, media refers to a means of communication. Broadly understood, mass media comprise a diverse array of platforms, including the press, broadcasting channels, cinema, visual media, and recorded audio formats or audio recordings, and the Internet—particularly the World Wide Web and internet-based social media platforms.

An in-depth analysis of Media Consumption as a study topic has been a well explored field in this time and day for West Bengal as a state, accordingly, an effort has been undertaken by looking into the relevant papers from several like spirited scholars. The study focuses on media use by considering the reasons behind the selection of specific platforms, such as Facebook, Whats-app, Snap-chat, My-space, YouTube, Blogs, Twitter amongst others for quick dissemination of information and instant response when the need arises has removed the dependency on traditional information dissemination media such as radio, television and newspaper, the type of media or information intake with its utility, and the importance of media literacy. Which will help identifying credible sources of information and distinguishing them from unreliable ones, thereby, promoting self-growth and enabling ethical and responsible consumption and sharing of information by the young population in particular here the students. The present study discusses the awareness of ongoing students on responsible utility of information and the underlying factors influencing such choices, along with their effects on individual development, explored through a case study involving a selected sample of school and college students. It further explores the challenges and opportunities associated with media consumption in India. The probable findings of persistent barriers like distraction, spam, privacy vulnerability, cyber bullying, lack of expertise and awareness of technology may be restraining the growth of media literacy in India. The expansion of digital technology spotted through rise in internet and mobile subscription in recent years has generated hope.



The term media literacy simply refers to knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to participate effectively in communication and information transactions in the media; ability of the audience to evaluate the credibility of information from different sources; understand the power of visual images and know how to “read” them; aware of a diverse cultural universe and appreciates multiple perspectives; express oneself clearly and creatively using different forms of media; recognize media’s influence on beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviour and the democratic process and to engage in critical thinking (Canadian Centre for Media Literacy, 2007; Raji, 2018). Media literacy helps audience to rationally and logically assess media contents, audience ability to do this signifies advancement in social value orientation which is a step ahead the usual human basic survival needs (Brown & Knight, 2006; Castellanos, 2007). India possesses a vast and highly dynamic media industry on a global scale, with over 900 satellite-based television networks, over 100,000 registered publications, and a rapidly growing digital media sector, Indians have unprecedented access to information. According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), India had over 750 million individuals actively engaged in internet usage by 2023, making it the second-largest online market globally.

Rationale for the Study

Social media has now become the intrinsic part of students’ life and having an impact on their academic performance (Alshuaibi et al., 2018). A pronounced association can be observed between students’ engagement with social media and their overall performance. Although this association, particularly in relation to social media use and academic performance, contributes to the strengthening of interpersonal social behaviour (Rueda et al., 2017), it diverts learners’ attention away from their academic pursuits, drawing them into various non-academic activities. An increasing reliance on these digital platforms has become a matter of concern. The constant state of connectivity encourages frequent monitoring of online updates, fostering a pattern of overuse that ultimately hampers the learning process and adversely affects scholastic achievement. (Raut & Patil, 2016).

Incorporating media literacy into the education system is essential for equipping the next generation with the skills they need to navigate the media landscape. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has recognized the importance of media literacy and has integrated it into the curriculum. Programs like the “Young Media Literate” initiative aim to educate students on media literacy, critical thinking, and digital citizenship. Media literacy is not just a skill but a necessity in modern India.

Literature Review

For educators and academics, student participation is a mystery. This work proposes a tentative paradigm for active learning that mentions electronics as a particularly influential component. Media consumption varies from culture to culture, but then all cultures are all “caught in the web” In US, the study of Powers, Moeller, and Yuan (2016) on students media use in getting political information shows that students mostly relied on a computer 50% in spring and 70% in fall, followed by cell phones 19% in spring; 38% in fall, and television 13% in spring; 47% in fall. Consumption through tablets and radio was minimal, while newspaper usage among the student groups was notably low.

A substantial body of literature and research has been devoted to this emerging area, predominantly at the international level and across various states of India, with comparatively limited studies conducted in West Bengal.



National-

Subramani R. et al. (2018) found Bangalore University students increasingly immerse themselves in social media platforms more for leisure, academics, and socialization, while Madras University students engage more with photos and videos. Sharma S. et al. (2022) reported social media benefits academic performance but impacts vary with personality traits (extraversion/introversion). Saini N. et al. (2023) highlighted social media's role in communication, collaboration, and learning, but noted distractions and misinformation risks. Sivakumar A. (2023) emphasized social media's potential for knowledge sharing, motivation, and engagement. Lalithambika C.K. (2024) identified informativeness, socialization, entertainment, and addictiveness as key factors affecting academic performance.

International-

Margaryan A. et al. (2015) and Richter Z.O. et al. (2015) noted MOOCs and digital media improve flexibility and access in higher education. Ojomo O. et al. (2018), Busuyi J.F. (2020), Chen M. et al. (2022), Mian S.T. et al. (2023), and Sales D.R. et al. (2024) highlighted both positive and negative academic and psychological impacts of social media. Divergent findings are due to location, variables, and usage patterns, with limited focus on intellectual enhancement and knowledge sharing across higher education.

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are:

- To determine why students, use different social media platform/ To assess social media use of students (e.g. Past experience, psychological factors, trends, values and beliefs)
- To investigate the type of media consumption of students and its utility
- To evaluate the significance of media literacy among students

Methodology

For the present study, dealing with analyzing Media Consumption Pattern to determine Students Knowledge Sharing and Media literacy, their ability to use varying media platforms and their knowledge on the spectrum to come into a conclusion to determine media fluency, both primary and secondary data has been used.

(a) Research Design:

Adopting a descriptive survey approach, the study drew upon a selected sample of respondents to evaluate their perspectives as a representative reflection of the wider population. The research design adopted was appropriate, as no variables within the research were manipulated. The study drew upon a sample of 50 participants selected through convenience sampling, with responses obtained using a systematically designed questionnaire distributed through Google Forms.



(b) Population and Sample:

A community-based survey was undertaken through the administration of an online questionnaire (Appendix) conducted from December 28, 2024 to December 31, 2024, among the population belonging to generations particularly Gen Z (12-27 years), a few Millennial's (28-43 years), from different education background and gender.

The most used platforms are youtube, Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook a few of them uses advance technology apps like ZEB home (a smart home automation app).

(c) Tools and Techniques:

The research instrument is a self-developed questionnaire, that was structured on the basis of convenience sampling technique. It is segregated into four sections; first section contains the general demographic details of the students. Second section of the questionnaire contained 9 items related to assessing media platforms use by students and its relation to academic performance, the third section was organized according to the type of media consumption and its impact, finally the fourth section deals with media literacy. Responses were obtained via an online Google Form from a diverse cohort of students, encompassing varied genders, age brackets, and educational backgrounds. For the present study, a range of tools and techniques were employed, such as Survey questionnaire, observing or tracking mobile use and various media reports are studied regarding media literacy among students. Hypotheses placed on a Likert scale of strongly agree (SD) agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly (SD) to give an overall qualitative reliability of the statements.

Few other techniques will be implemented to visually represent the collected data through graphical representations, tables and images.

(d) Analysis of Data:

After collecting research data, some insight as to the likely factors influencing or a hindrance to gaining responsible media users. Also determine by qualitative questions how media consumption is impacting their knowledge sharing and learning capacity.

Results and Discussion

This study seeks to critically explore the dimensions of responsible digital competence among college students, based on their soft and hard skill proficiency. It considers factors influencing the use of various social media platforms, their capacity to address vulnerabilities associated with gadget usage, the effectiveness of online networks – particularly social media, in supporting education and the perceptions of the target group regarding internet literacy, all of which together provide a comprehensive understanding of this topic in fulfilment of this paper.

The validity of findings and the quality of decision-making in any research are contingent upon the rigour of data collection and analysis. Accordingly, a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, has been employed to enhance the study's effectiveness and facilitate a more streamlined analytical process. The use of quantitative analysis, in particular, offers a comprehensive perspective on the subject, thereby rendering the investigation more coherent and accessible.



Following the completion of the online survey administered to the student population through a self-developed and validated questionnaire, a range of statistical analyses and diagrammatic representations were compiled and are presented in this chapter.

The analysis is based on a dataset comprising 53 responses. A significant proportion of participants falls within the 23–24 age bracket. The study primarily concentrates on young adults aged 17–30, who are widely regarded as the most technologically adept segment of the population. (Figure 1)

About 69.8% of the participants are female, while the remaining 30.2% fall within the male category. A considerable diversity is evident with regard to educational attainment, ranging from school-level education to postgraduate qualifications, with postgraduates constituting the largest segment of the sample (41.5%).

Regarding awareness of the concept of media literacy, nearly 50.9% of participants demonstrate awareness, whereas 7.5% remain entirely unfamiliar, and the rest exhibit varying degrees of understanding. (Figure 2, 3, 4).

Table 1: ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA IN TERMS OF ITS UTILITY OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING (in percentage)

ITEMS	SD	D	N	A	S A
Social media encourage socialization rather than academic performance	0	25	62.5	11.5	1
Social media allow students to express their views on social issues	1	1	22	62.5	13.5
Social media allow for easy sharing and access of learning materials	0	0	3	35	62
Leads to frequent mood swings and impulsive behaviour	12.5	0	36.5	50	1
Social media encourage laziness in some students	1	2	50	25	22
Social media promote illicit activities among students	0	1	77.5	11.5	10
Social media constitute a distraction to students' academic programme	0	1	12.5	74	12.5
Broadens students' knowledge on difficult subject matter	0	12.5	37.5	37.5	12.5
Social media facilitate quick dissemination of information	0	12.5	37.5	37.5	12.5

Table (1) presents how the pattern of Media Consumption determines Students Knowledge Sharing and information capacities. Over 80% of participants acknowledged the substantial influence of media in shaping and enriching general knowledge concerning life and societal events, (Figure 17), with its indulgence in the various platforms, i.e. Television (37.5%), Social media (87.5%), all of them (25%) (Figure 12) and only



(12.5%) engages in Newspaper, nevertheless (50%) are concerned with the articles genre, followed by news segment (25%) and entertainment (12.5%) respectively (Figure 14). For social media platform the leading genre is entertainment (62%) (Figure 13). For broadcast media (50%) are engaged in drama, news segment, music shows, cartoons evenly (Figure 15).

Majority of the population have a neutral perception on social media encouraging more of socialization rather than academic performance (62.5%), it is instead observed about (25%) disagree with the statement (Figure 5); social media allow students to express their views on social issues (76%); social media allow for easy sharing of learning materials among students (97%); social media facilitate quick dissemination of information (50%), a significant (37.5%) remains neutral (Figure 19); when asked if it leads to frequent mood swings and impulsive behaviour, majority (50%) agreed but it is observed a significant number of (12.5%) strongly disagreed and about (36.5%) remained neutral.

With regard to the influence of media content on thinking (50%) of the respondents believed it impacts in relationship with friends and opposite gender, in choice of words and language, in the way of relating with parents and siblings and education. The remaining (50%) believed the content influenced only their education (Figure 9); social media assist in broadening students' knowledge on difficult subject matter (50%) and (37.5%) remains neutral, around (12.5%) disagrees (Figure 20). As indicated by participants, media serves as a source of learning in areas such as language acquisition (25%), current affairs (87.5%), insights into scientific and technological developments (75%), as well as sexual behaviour and other domains (37%) each. (Figure 7)

Conversely, respondents were also questioned on whether social media fosters a tendency toward laziness among some students, as they increasingly depend on peers' inputs while completing academic tasks, (50%) remained neutral and another (50%) were divided between agree and strongly agree, it is to be noticed that no one disagreed on this statement (Figure 3); social media promote illicit activities among students sometimes (87.5%); a substantial majority of participants acknowledge that social media serves as a distraction to students' academic pursuits (87.5%) and again none disagrees (Figure 22).

With respect to the ultimate motive of media contents, Educational (62.5%) and Entertainment (62.5%) both are leading, closely followed by advertising and enlightening (50%) and only (25%) for credibility (Figure 18).

When the subject of web use comes to the picture, its know-how of responsible use cannot be overshadowed. Hence, "Media Literacy is a set of competencies that enable us to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of our own, and to recognize and engage with the social and political influence of media in everyday life." (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012). Within the study, approximately 62.5% of participants reported utilizing content obtained through social media channels to supplement their classroom learning. (Figure 23). With respect to awareness about (62%) are conscious to never share any personal details with anyone meeting online, about (22%) take screenshots for safety and (13.5%) don't respond or retaliate to unnecessary information (Figure 25).

A small attempt was also made to engage the sample population by requesting them to download any screen time app like Stay-Free-Screen Time etc., with their usage being recorded over a period of two days. Around 10 people participated and, it was observed maximum time invested for majority participant was on Social networking sites, like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and it is evident on an average the total usage is more than the global daily average. (Figure 26)

The table suggests that social media use exerts both positive and negative influence on students' holistic performance, which is slowly and gradually moving towards an optimistic digital progression with age irrespective of gender and education formalities.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY POPULATION BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

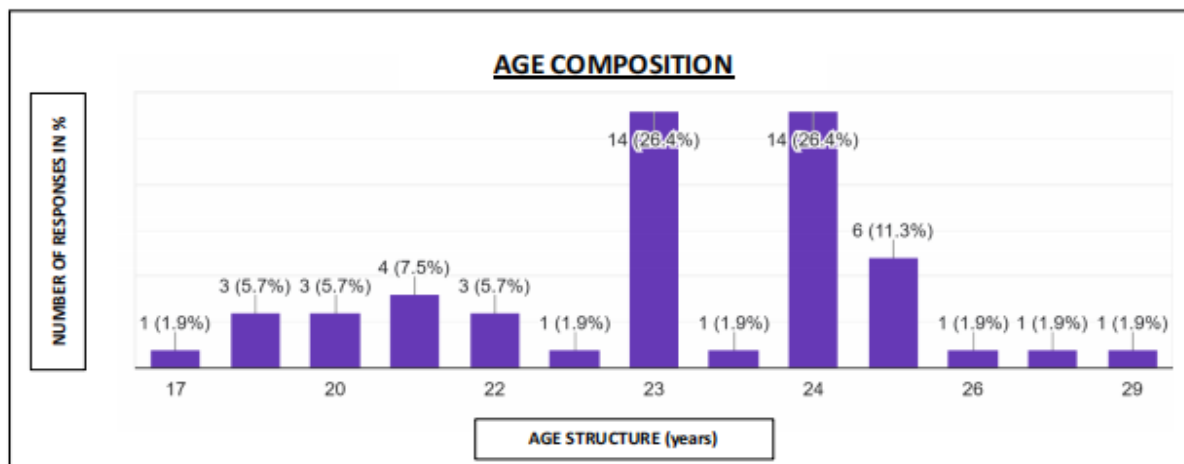


FIG: 1

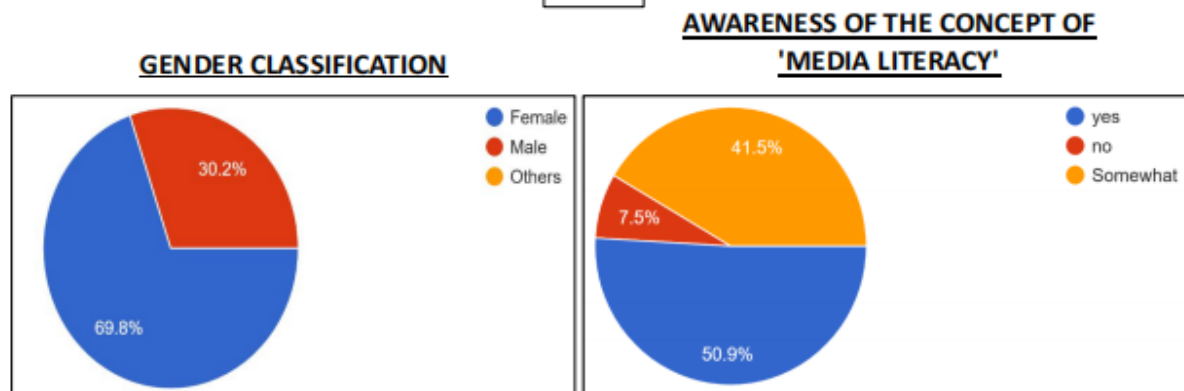


FIG: 2

FIG: 3

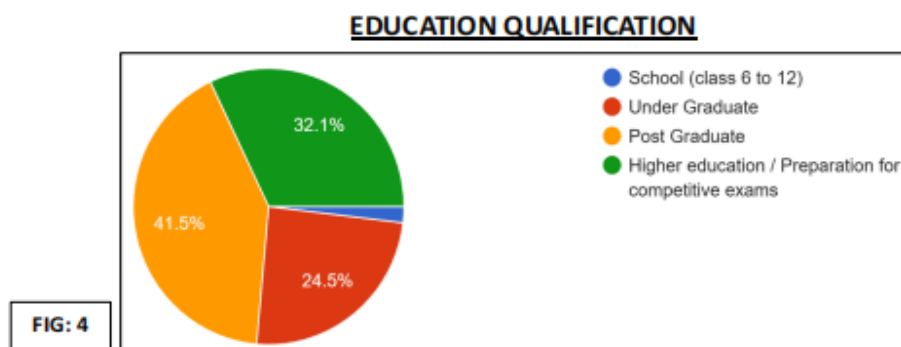


FIG: 4

SOURCE: All diagrammatic representation has been derived from online survey conducted in December, 2024

**RESPONSE OF THE POPULATION ON FACTORS RESPONSIBLE
 FOR VARIATION IN PLATFORM USE**

**SOCIAL MEDIA ENCOURAGE SOCIALIZATION AMONG
 STUDENTS RATHER THAN ENHANCING ACADEMIC
 PERFORMANCE**

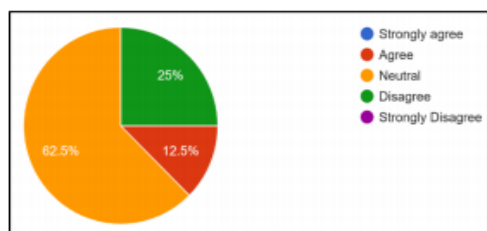


FIG: 5

**SOCIAL MEDIA ALLOW STUDENTS TO EXPRESS
 THEIR VIEWS ON SOCIAL ISSUES**

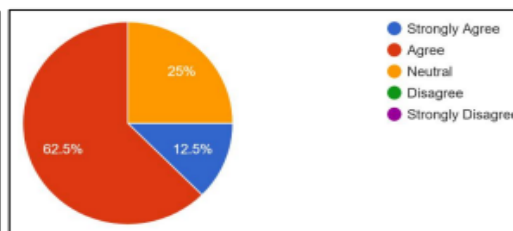


FIG: 6

SPECIFIC THINGS YOU LEARN IN THE MEDIA

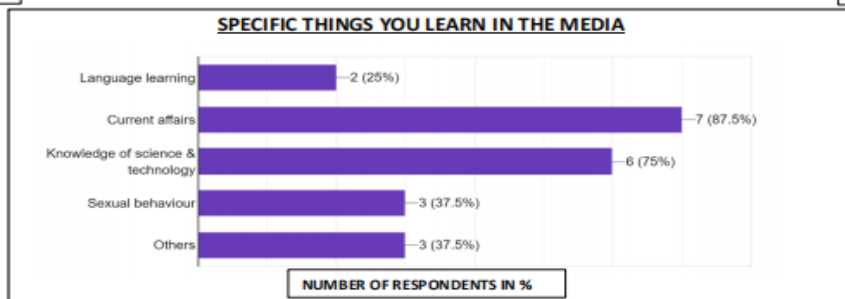


FIG: 7

**SOCIAL MEDIA ALLOW FOR EASY SHARING
 AND ACCESS OF LEARNING MATERIALS**

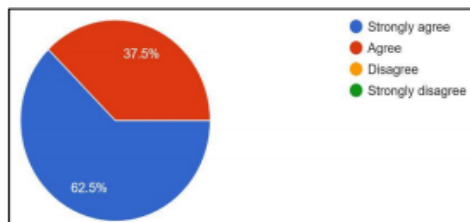


FIG: 8

MEDIA CONTENTS INFLUENCE ON THINKING

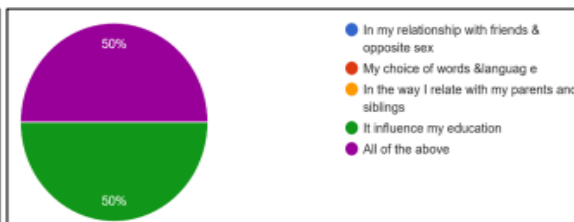


FIG: 9

SOURCE: All diagrammatic representation has been derived from online survey conducted in December, 2024



**RESPONSE OF THE POPULATION ON TYPE OF MEDIA
CONSUMPTION & ITS UTILITY**

**SOCIAL MEDIA ENCOURAGE LAZINESS IN SOME
STUDENTS**

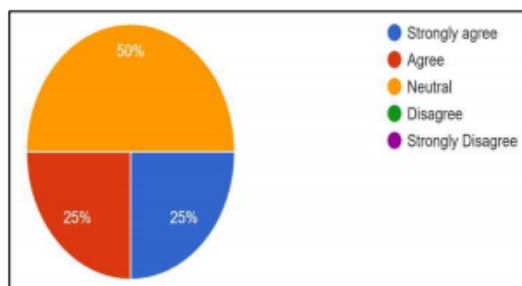


FIG: 10

**LEADS TO FREQUENT MOOD SWINGS AND
IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOUR DUE TO THE SOCIAL**

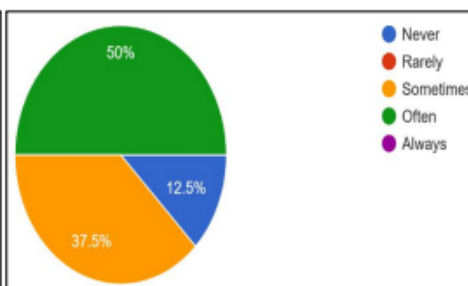


FIG: 11

FREQUENTLY USED MEDIA

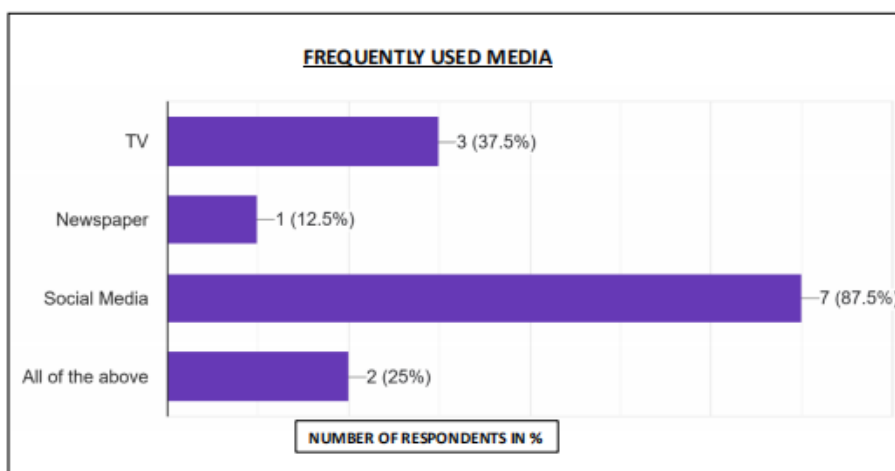


FIG: 12

SOURCE: All diagrammatic representation has been derived from online survey conducted in December, 2024

FOR SOCIAL MEDIA, THE GENRES USED FREQUENTLY

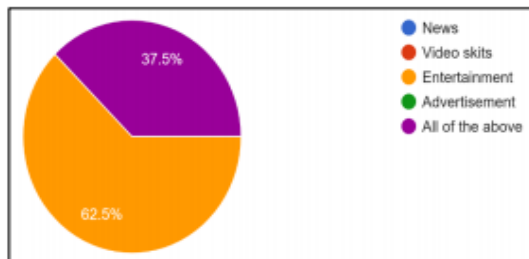


FIG: 13

FOR NEWSPAPER, THE GENRES USED FREQUENTLY

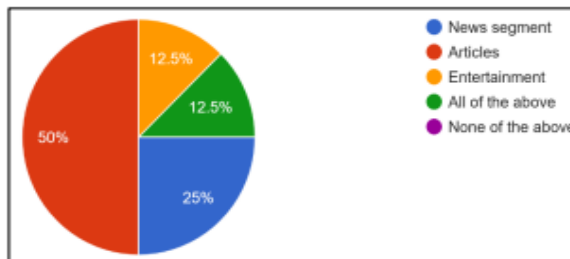


FIG: 14

FOR BROADCAST MEDIA, GENRES LISTENED/WATCHED FREQUENTLY

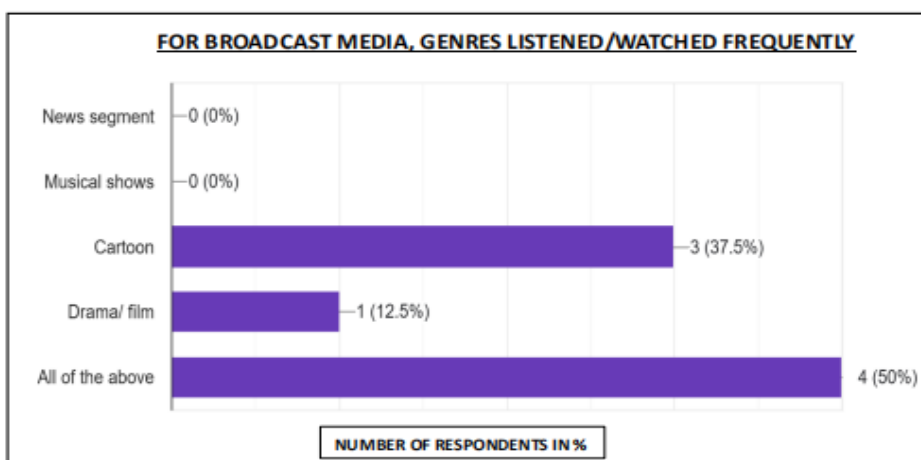


FIG: 15

DO YOU OFTEN KNOW MOTIVES BEHIND THE CONTENTS YOU SEE

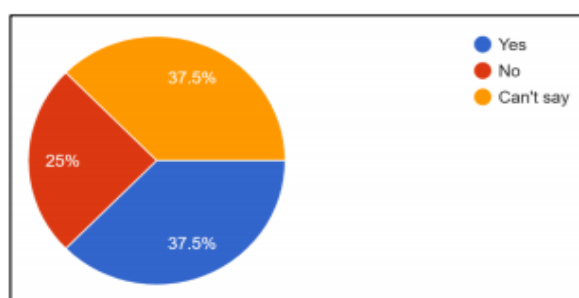


FIG: 16

FROM WHAT YOU VIEW IN THE MEDIA, YOU LEARN WHAT ENHANCES YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LIFE AND EVENTS IN THE SOCIETY

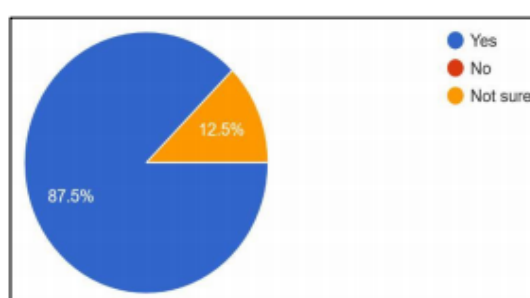


FIG: 17

SOURCE: All diagrammatic representation has been derived from online survey conducted in December, 2024

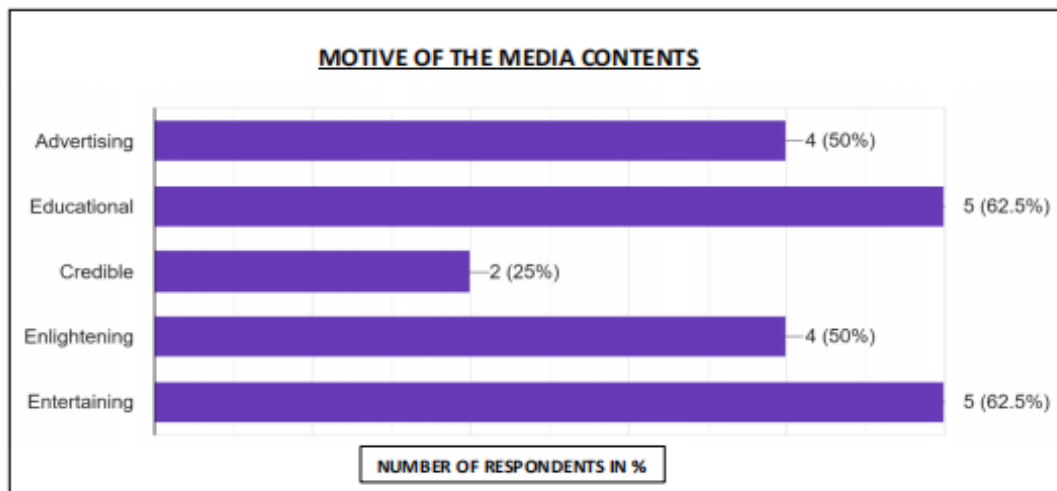


FIG: 18

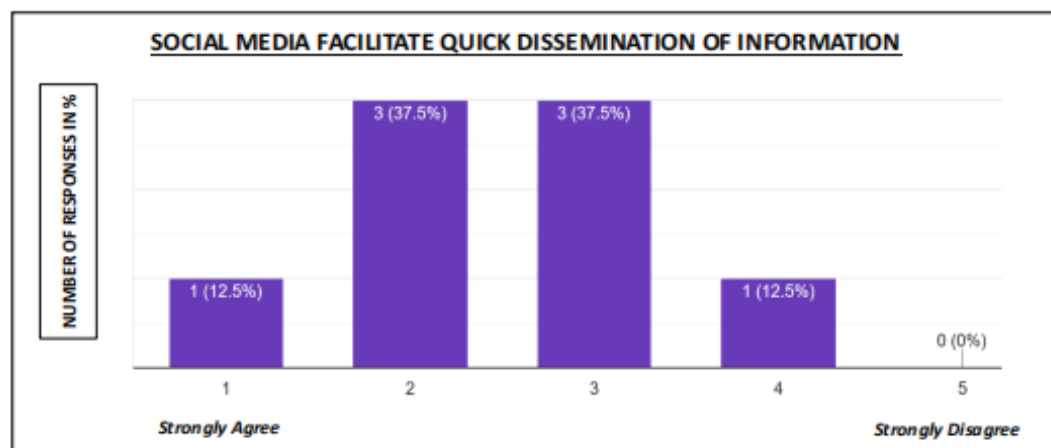


FIG: 19

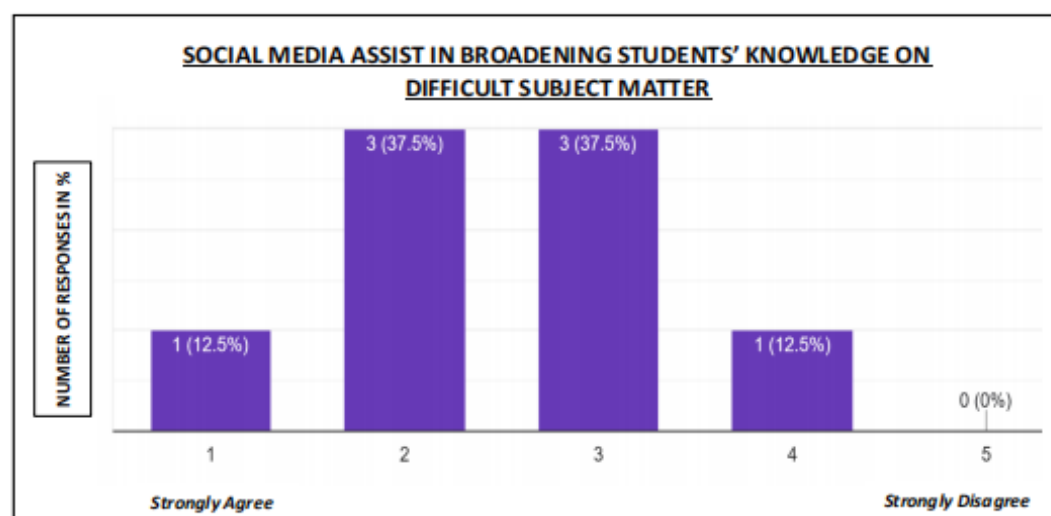


FIG: 20

SOURCE: All diagrammatic representation has been derived from online survey conducted in December, 2024

SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTE ILICIT ACTIVITIES AMONG STUDENTS

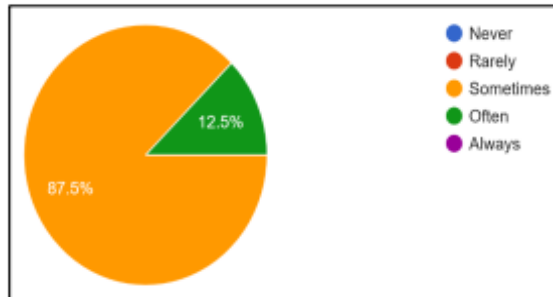


FIG: 21

SOCIAL MEDIA CONSTITUTE A DISTRACTION TO STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

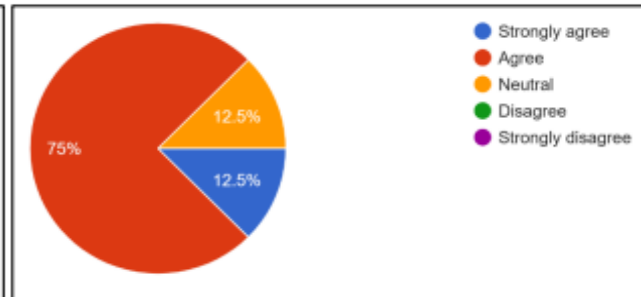


FIG: 22

RESPONSE OF THE POPULATION ON ROLE OF MEDIA LITERACY

USE MATERIALS OBTAINED FROM SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO COMPLEMENT CLASS LESSONS

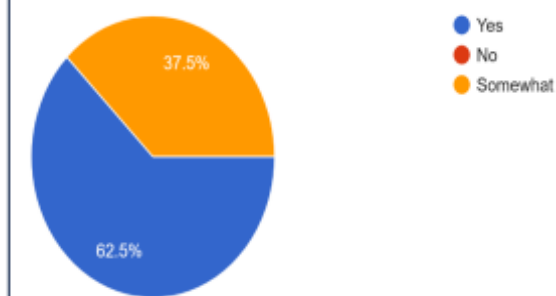


FIG: 23

KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDIA CONTENT MOTIVE INFLUENCES THE CONSUMPTION OF THEIR MESSAGES

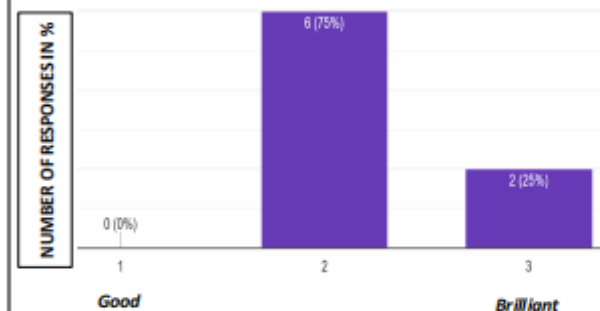


FIG: 24

AWARENESS OF VULNERABILITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

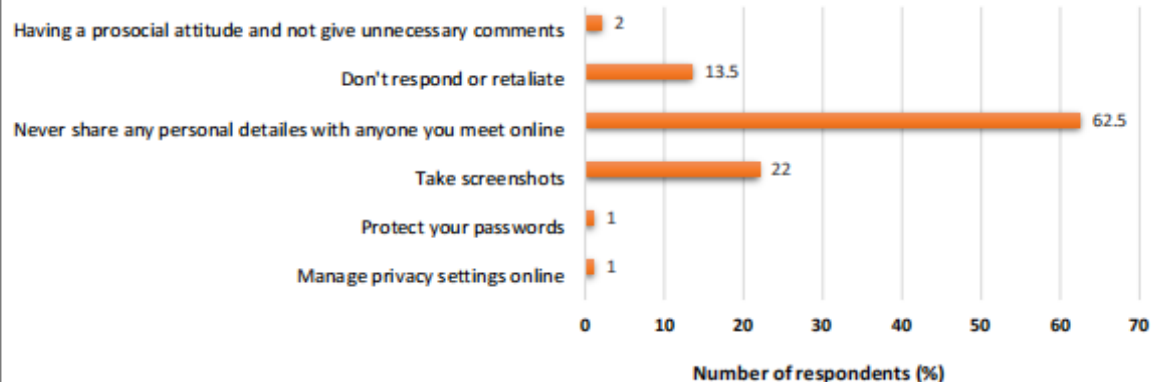
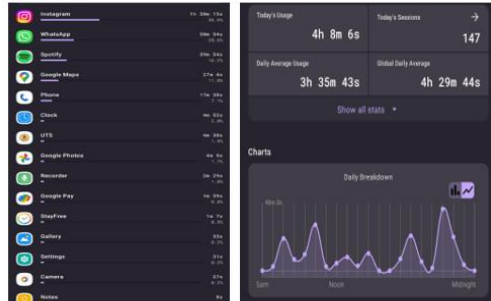


FIG: 25

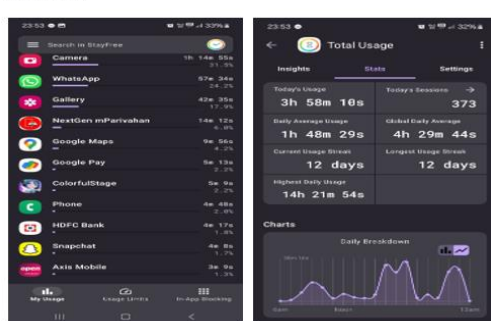
SOURCE: All diagrammatic representation has been derived from online survey conducted in December, 2024

OBSERVED SCREEN-TIME (FIGURE 26)

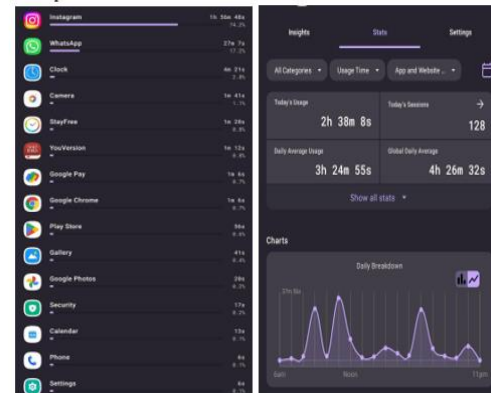
Participant 1



Participant 2



Participant 5



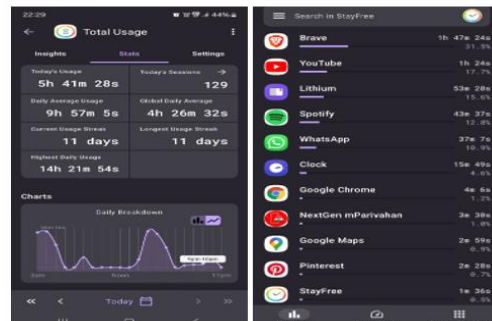
Participant 6



Participant 3



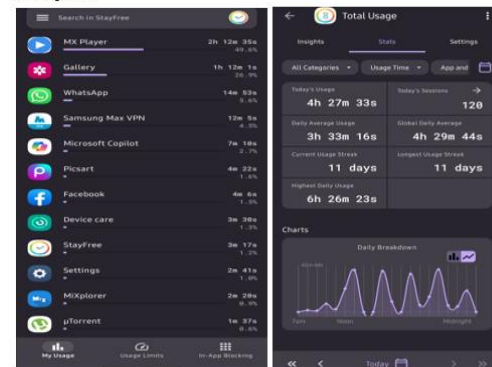
Participant 4



Participant 7



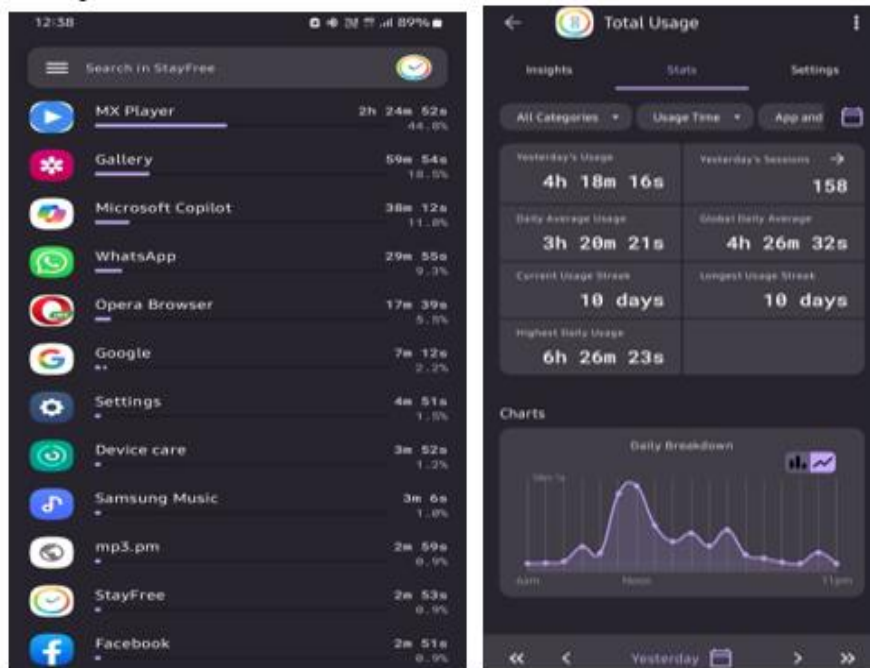
Participant 8



SOURCE: All screen time data have been derived from the mobile screen tracker app Stay Free, 2024



Participant 9



Participant 10



SOURCE: All screen time data have been derived from the mobile screen tracker app called Stay Free, 2024



Conclusion

This paper, dealing with student's media consumption pattern, focuses on factors influencing the awareness of Media literacy, on Digital skills, factors influencing the notion regarding technical competences and its over utility in a young adult's life.

By analyzing the responses of the target group, it is evident that the concept of Media literacy and use of these tools are quite popular, particularly among the 23 to 25 years age group, evident from their awareness. This period is a transitional stage between adolescence and full adulthood, with individuals still exploring their identity and life paths. It fosters informed decision-making and encourages participation in democratic processes.

The findings of the study indicate that a substantial proportion of the surveyed population demonstrates awareness of information literacy, reflecting on one's media choices, identifying sponsored content, recognizing stereotypes, analyzing propaganda and discussing the benefits, risks, and harms of media use. This indicates that most of them go online, as revealed in the study, suggesting that at some point, social media is used for communication with family, friends, classmates, and teachers. They are also utilizing it to be updated on the activities and other school work, allowing them to discuss academic matters-the same with the key indicator, Communication. In terms of social skills, the respondents are moderately influenced as well. It is because social media is also a way to interact with others on online platforms. It provides opportunities to connect with new people and supports students in enhancing their social lives.

Keeping all these intact they are also sensible about the consequence of overuse. Especially, in order to provide proper access to education and other progressive growth, this concept becomes increasingly significant. Chosen as per convenience sampling. The study population, on the whole, reflects notable advancement in media literacy, as the young adult population is seen to show keen interest in the know-how of better utility of technology and the overall digital world, and has accepted computer learning in a positive way. They have understood the complications related to media backwardness, though a few exceptional cases are existing but the change has already started and works towards the better. This paper suggests an improvement in their outlook into media literacy. The study thus posits that engagement with social media carries both beneficial and adverse effects on students' knowledge sharing and their media literacy performance.

Recommendation

Empowering students with strong media literacy is key to transforming social media from a distraction into a tool for growth. Educational institutions should integrate media literacy within their curricula, promote responsible and balanced digital engagement, cultivate awareness of privacy and online safety, and encourage critical evaluation of media content. Teachers and policymakers should strategically utilize social media to enhance knowledge sharing, improve academic performance, and promote collaborative learning. They are further expected to offer guidance on effective time management and encourage healthy digital habits to minimize distractions and prevent overreliance on social media platforms. Strengthening students' digital skills will enable them to navigate the media landscape responsibly, combat misinformation, and contribute positively to academic and personal development.

The country is projected to have the largest working-age population in the world within the next two decades. In a nation characterized by diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives, the ability to critically



assess media content is crucial for developing informed and engaged citizens, which in turn enhances productivity and promotes inclusive growth. It needs to embrace the responsible use of media, that can empower its citizens to navigate the complex media landscape, combat misinformation, and contribute to a more informed and democratic society.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name-
2. Gender-
3. Age-
4. Current education status?
 - Under Graduate
 - Post Graduate
 - Higher education/ Preparation for competitive exams
5. Are you aware of the concept of Media Literacy?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat

Assess Social Media platform uses of students (Factors Responsible)-

1. From what you view in the media, you learn what enhances your knowledge about life and events in the society?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
2. If yes, what specific things do you learn in the media?
 - Language learning
 - Current affairs
 - Knowledge of science and technology
 - Sexual behaviour
 - Others
3. In what ways do the media contents influence your thinking?
 - In my relationship with friends & opposite sex
 - My choice of words and language
 - In the way I relate with my parents and siblings
 - It influences my education
 - All of the above



4. Social media allow students to express their views on social issues.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
5. Social media allow students to discuss academic issue beyond the classroom environment.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat
6. Social media allow for easy sharing and access of learning materials among students.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
7. Group platforms formed by students on social media facilitate interaction among them. (**Specify how and if not why?**)
8. It leads to frequent mood swings and impulsive behaviour due to the social media posts.
 - Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Always
9. Social media encourage laziness on the part of some students as they rely mainly on information from other students in doing their academic work.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree



Type of Media consumption & its utility-

1. Which of these media do you frequently use?
 - Television
 - Newspaper
 - Social Media
 - All of the Above
2. If it is social media, which of these genres do you use frequently?
 - News
 - Entertainment
 - Advertisement
 - All of the above
3. If it is broadcast media, which of these genres do you use listen/watch frequently?
 - News segment
 - Musical shows
 - Cartoon
 - Drama/film
 - All of the above
4. If it is newspaper, which of these genres do you use frequently?
 - News segment
 - Articles
 - Entertainment
 - All of the above
 - None of the above
5. Do you often know motives behind the contents you see in the media?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Can't say
6. Describe your knowledge of the motive of the media contents you are exposed to?
 - Advertising
 - Educational
 - Credible
 - Enlightening
 - Entertaining



7. A lot of time is wasted by unlimited access to social media and reduces students' commitment to academic activities.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly agree						Strongly disagree

8. Social media have negative influence on students' grammatical expression or increases spelling errors in students' written work.

(If 'YES' how? Give example like "bro, yolo, gdnyt")

9. Social media facilitate quick dissemination of information among students.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly agree						Strongly disagree

10. Social media promote collaborative work among students? (If yes how or why not)

11. Social media assist in broadening students' knowledge on difficult subject matter.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly agree						Strongly disagree

12. Support your statement to the above question, if yes how and why not?

13. Social media encourage socialization among students rather than enhancing academic performance.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. Social media promote illicit activities among students.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always



15. Social media constitute a distraction to students' academic programme.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Role of Media literacy-

1. I use materials sourced through social networking sites like you tube to support classroom learning content.

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

2. I am aware of cyber bullying, online fraud on certain digital social networks and take appropriate measures, when necessary, like. **(Choose all relevant points below)**

- Manage privacy settings online
- Protect your passwords.
- Take screenshots
- Refrain from disclosing any personal information to individuals encountered online
- Don't respond or retaliate
- Have a prosocial attitude and not give unnecessary comments

3. I use social media that offers MOOC's (Massive open online course)

[If yes what are the courses, if no why?]

4. How has your knowledge of the media content motive influence your consumption of their messages?

	1	2	3	
Good				Brilliant

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Marginalized characters of William Shakespeare

Shreosi Goswami, Dr. Sanghita Sanyal

Abstract

A massive scale inrush of dark skinned Africans that was witnessed during the Elizabethan Era England and the grave anti - Semitic attitude that severely pervaded the era, largely catalysed the already existing ethnic and racial stress in England, a nation that was quite unwilling then to look beyond their traditional ideas of religion and race. These became a burning theme for playwright like William Shakespeare who took to bringing out the woes of these marginalized segments of the late sixteenth century society through many iconic characters like Shylock, Caliban and Othello among others in his plays. This paper aims at analysing Shakespeare's brilliant presentation of racial and ethnic segregation through the two greatly remarkable characters- Shylock and Othello from his plays, the rom-com The Merchant of Venice and the tragedy - Othello respectively and the manner of their ostracization that also subdued all attempts of rebellion against the norms of the blurred peripheries that they were put to dwell on. Hapless Caliban from The Tempest also happened to be a victim of expulsion from his own territory. The paper also reflects on the purported idea of liberalism that the city of Venice claimed to be an epitome of, against which both the plays are set and how both the characters resting on the blurred peripheries become victims of the visible centre of the city.

Keywords: Victim, ghettoization, Venice, race, ethnicity, Shakespeare.

Marginalised Characters of William Shakespeare

How many Christians actually bothered to contemplate on Shylock's fate while feasting on the seemingly copacetic play's ending? Would their inherent beliefs have allowed a brook of sympathy to trickle down their hearts pervaded with a pride of their superior religion? A massive scale inrush of dark skinned Africans that was witnessed during the Elizabethan Era by England and the grave antisemitic attitude that severely pervaded the era, largely catalysed the already existing ethnic and racial stress in England, a nation that was quite unwilling then to look beyond their traditional ideas of religion and race. In both his plays The Merchant of Venice and Othello, Shakespeare embraces the 'other'- the very 'other' that had perpetually been the object of violence and hatred. He contradicts racism by stripping open the farce of racist and ethnic binaries, created to place Jews, Africans and individuals like Caliban away from the English Self, permanently labelling them as inferior and allowing them to interfere into the English order would only result into an uncontrollably chaotic society. Shakespeare being a keen observer of the political struggles of the England of his time, took to creating a kind of literature that was 'sugar-coated' in the sense that on a superficial level it appeared amiable to the Elizabethan audience but what floated underneath was a grotesque strain of the realities of the racially and ethnically marginalised strata of the Renaissance England. An excess of Melanin In 'The Moor's' body owing to the geographical location of the place he hailed from, proved to be immensely detrimental as it ignited deep seated prejudices. Othello was hardly ever addressed by his original name, just like Caliban from The Tempest, Prospero frequently insults and degrades Caliban,



calling him a "monster" and "slave". They vented out their contempt by blaming his uncivilised heritage and savage origins. In doing so, they try to justify their irrational hatred by projecting it on racism, calling him the "erring barbarian" (Oth. 1.3.356), "thicklips" (Oth.1.1.66) and "an old black ram/ Is tuppung your white ewe". (Oth. 1.1.87-88) Critic Sukanta Chaudhuri observed that Iago "is fascinated by the morbid stereotype of the gross but virile Negro possessing the delicate but perverted white woman." All those gathered together with Othello as their virtuous leader to find a solution to the national crisis are consciously aware of his alien background evident in his black skin. As long as he fulfils his job of a valiant soldier it is fine but when he dares to love the daughter of one of them he becomes the target of racial attack by the father. Brabantio's beliefs flowering from the inherent traditional beliefs that the blacks are the practitioners of witchcraft, finds expression when he holds Othello liable- "She is abus'd, stol'n from me and corrupted, / By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks, / For nature so preposterously to err / Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense, / Sans witchcraft could not" (Oth. 1.3.61-64). But Othello's cry of defence was no soft affair. He doesn't just meekly give in to these allegations, rather refutes when he says, "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, / And I lov'd her that she did pity them, / This only is the witchcraft I have us'd" (Oth. 1.3.167-169). Brabantio's wrath made him say that if Othello is not punished, the first offices of the state will be filled by black complexioned "Bond-slaves and pagans," (Oth. 1.3.99) of Africa. Othello became a victim of backstabbing by Iago who pretended to be on Othello's side but was actually robbing Othello of his possessions. Both Shylock and Othello are victims of fooling. Portia, the disguised lawyer incorporated an improbable clause that was not present in the bond- "Shed thou no blood;" and when Shylock should have received his bare principal he got a curt reply - "Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture, / To be so taken at thy peril, Jew" (MV. 4.1.346-347) and the entire Christian community held her as a "second Daniel" (MV. 4.1.343) that has come to judgement. Likewise, Othello deserved the marital bliss yet he was perfectly deprived of what could and would have been his and he eventually succumbs to the injury gifted by his offenders.

The malignity in Shylock is not motiveless. Clear traces of motives can be traced in the play to account for the malevolence in him, which is evident when he bitterly screams out about his treatment at Antonio's hands- when Antonio calls Shylock "misbeliever, cut-throat dog", and Antonio spat upon Shylock's Jewish gaberdine because Shylock used his own money to make profit. Shylock adds that Antonio spat on his beard and kicked him as he would kick a stray dog away from his threshold and then Antonio was asking for money from him (MV. 1.3.107-115). The wrongs inflicted on a long-suffering race that have been wandering up and down in quest of peace for centuries, have found expression in his protest. Although on a few occasions Shylock is seen coming to terms with all the treatment meted out to him by the proud representative of the Christian religion and accepting it saying that Shylock had endured it all with patience and a shrug, because Jews are known for their ability to endure (MV. 1.3.106), yet he is seen emerging as a terrific fighter backed by a fanatical love for his religion when he voices out- Does a Jew not have eyes? Does a Jew not have hands, organs, senses, affections, passions? Are the Jews not fed with the same food, hurt by the same weapons, affected by the same diseases, healed by the same medicines, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as Christians? If Christians stab them, would not they bleed? If Christians tickle Jews, would not the Jews laugh? If Christians poison Jews, would not they die? And if Christians wrong Jews, should the Jews not take revenge? If Jews are like Christians in all the other ways, Jews would resemble Christians in terms of revenge, too. If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what does he do? He takes revenge (MV .3.1.58-72) Notwithstanding all attempts of rebellion, the voices of these revolts get suppressed when Antonio the supposedly superior flagbearer of goodness asserts that he would call Shylock such names again, spit on him again, and spurn him, too. (MV. 1.3.126)

In context of exploring the traces of racial ideologies in the plays, what cannot be overlooked is the common setting of both the plays- the city of Venice that was supposedly the epitome of liberalism, the very



flagbearer of an equality that ought not to have allowed any scope of racial or ethnic discrimination between the foreigners and the natives. Yet, the super imposition of alienation and subjugation on the minorities was far from being prevented. So contemptuous was Shylock of the race that cost him his survival, that while he ran on the streets of Venice mad at his daughter's treachery he was confused about what exactly to mourn for: whether the betrayal of his daughter that has caused him greater grief or the fact that she has fled with a Christian with his ducats- "O my ducats, O my daughter! /Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats! / Justice !, the law !". (MV. 2.8.15-17) Shylock exhibited immense faith on the legal system of Venice in his deep rooted belief that the city of law and civilisation wouldn't deny him justice when he cried out during the court proceedings, "If you deny it, let the danger light / Upon your charter and your city's freedom". (MV. 4.1.38-39) But what we see is the complete destruction of his belief system when the tables turn on him, shattering the very bedrocks of his existence. Justice denied to him, also he was robbed of all his means of sustenance without the slightest scope of the right to question the unreasonable jurisdiction of a lawyer who possessed no experience of law. As a setting, Venice serves Shakespeare's needs of a place where a non-European, and potentially non-Christian, man could both hold significant authority but still be distrusted. This particular setting in context of Othello is apt to depict the visual and the cultural isolation of The African descendent. Despite the faith entrusted in Othello, it is due to this setting that we can still see the possibility of distrust in the hearts of the native characters like Roderigo, Iago and Brabantio. In the end, the 'multicultural' city of Venice which boasted of a great diversity of ethnicities and religions and was supposed to be the pinnacle of modernity and openness to liberal ideas, couldn't break through the shackles imposed by the stereotypical beliefs that Shakespeare's England was based on and therefore wasn't able to rescue either The Jew or The Moor. Caliban, a half-human, half-beast creature who is enslaved by Prospero and treated as inferior, representing a common theme of colonialism where the indigenous population is subjugated by the colonizer. Prospero landed on the island and claimed it as his own, despite Caliban being the only native inhabitant, effectively enslaving Caliban and taking control of the island through his magical powers. Nobody wanted justice for Shylock or Caliban, people witnessed they were wronged but no one came to their rescue. Prospero called Caliban "born devil" whereas "Hell is empty and the devils are here", Prospero being one of the devils himself. Just like the colonisers felt the need to civilize us- the colonized ones by looting us blatantly so we became "White man's burden". Caliban was marginalized in his native place by Prospero since the binary worked like Prospero- Caliban, East India Company- Indians. Just like Simone de Beauvoir's SECOND SEX, Caliban and we Indians became the second class citizens in our own terrains. Lady Macbeth was labelled as the fourth witch but Macbeth was never called a wizard. Witches have been disenfranchised and burned alive. Lady Macbeth immersed herself in serving Macbeth, since the beginning, readers do not witness her words/exchanges or dialogues but she was seen reading a letter by Macbeth. Macbeth did not even bother to ask his "dearest partner of greatness" how she was in the letter, very selfishly the letter began about the prophecies of the witches which catered to his vested interests so when she could wake up the sleeping and unuttered ambitions of her husband she was EVIL. The three weird sisters- the witches were neither given feminine features nor a place in the mainstream, Shakespeare's ruthless epoch never allowed them to come out in proper daylight but if they were so evil how could having a little bit of Vitamin D be detrimental ? They were torched alive so they were quite habituated to the energy of the ball of fire- SUN. Macbeth never asked his wife to be a co-ruler with him but he took her suggestions which proves that women alone are capable of running civilizations. Men had to meddle in or else they would have been marginalized like it happens in the feminist utopias.

People embrace their premature nemesis when they contemplate revenge. Of course Shylock had his reasons but contemplating a revenge that is excessively gory to the extent of plotting someone's death cannot really be a fair justification of anger. Frank Sinatra and Confucius's maxim "seek revenge and you should dig two graves" holds true when we think of the plight of the unfortunate, Shylock. The cultural and racial injustices inflicted on Othello and Shylock were in no way justified but what cannot be overlooked is the fact that



neither of them was flawless. On the other hand, Othello's extreme jealousy and insecurity led to both his and Desdemona's doom. In the words of Freud, jealousy is not a "rational emotion" for it robs us of our prudent self. Othello ought to have trusted his wife and their love just like Shylock should have taken the huge amount offered by Bassanio initially and then their futures could have been different and better. Shakespeare portrays the follies and the vices of men and women, their passions and sins, their misfortunes and sorrows, their strength as well as their weaknesses, treacherous friends and open enemies and the cruel fate that overtakes and destroys them completely. In the words of Sir Walter Raleigh, in Shakespeare's plays, "there is always a centre of interest. Some of the characters are kept in the full light of this area of perfect vision. Others moving in the outer field of vision have no value, save in the relation to the centre." Both Shylock and Othello were the unfortunate sufferers belonging to two disparaged sections marked by their racial and ethnic differentiation that was guiltlessly imposed by a so-called progressive Nation, with no escape from the doom. Shakespeare imparts his own beliefs through his characters. He, being a keen observer of human life, reports his observations through the interaction of his characters. The binaries have been blurred in both the plays to depict how the stiff definitions of self and the other are nothing but grave misconceptions.

Literature Review

- 1) Movie- Omkara (2006) by Vishal Bhardwaj Adapted from Shakespeare's Othello, where the protagonist Ajay Devgn has been compared to Othello and Kareena Kapoor Khan as Desdemona. Like the tragedy, here Devgn's low caste has been portrayed and like any stereotypical Bollywood portrayal, the intersectionality is at work- his complexion is dark while Kareena like Desdemona is fair and from a high caste.
- 2) Judith Lanzendorfof College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, English Department, University of Findlay. Here she expresses that how Caliban was verbally abused and called a "devil" whereas he was just like us
- 3) Shakespeare's Violent Women: A Feminist Analysis of Lady Macbeth by Camila Reyes (Department of English) & Amy Kenny (Department of Psychology) University of Sussex.

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Constructing Classroom Disability in Children's Fiction: A Critical Discourse Analysis of R.J.Palacio's "Wonder"

Srinjana Roy, Dr. Ranjita Dawn

*You're gonna reach the sky
Fly . . . Beautiful child
— Eurythmics, "Beautiful Child"*

Abstract

The present study examines contemporary trends in children's fiction, particularly looking at the portrayal of disability in R.J. Palacio's *WONDER* (2012) and its film adaptation. The study explores how such representations contribute to shaping inclusive attitudes among young readers and examines their pedagogical implications for elementary education. Through a close reading of the text, the paper analyzes the psychological and social dimensions of August "Auggie" Pullman's experience as a child with a craniofacial difference, emphasizing how his physical appearance affects his self-concept and social interactions. The first section investigates the correlation between disability and identity formation, while the second examines the Pullman family's adaptive strategies using frameworks like Family Resilience and Family Systems-Illness models. These perspectives illuminate how familial support mediates both the challenges and acceptance of disability.

The third section emphasizes the role of the classroom as a microcosm of society, analyzing peer interactions, bullying, and empathy in order to gauge how educational spaces shape collective attitudes toward difference. The study thus evaluates how Palacio's narrative challenges traditional depictions of disability by fostering empathy, tolerance, and acceptance among readers. It also considers how the novel's Mult perspectival narration allows readers to engage with diverse emotional and ethical standpoints, thus deepening social understanding.

Extending beyond *WONDER*, the paper situates the novel within a broader discourse on inclusivity and cultural diversity in children's literature, encompassing picture books, graphic novels, and young adult fiction. It argues that such narratives not only reconstruct perceptions of disability but also serve as transformative pedagogical tools that encourage social awareness and emotional literacy. Ultimately, this study underscores the vital role of inclusive storytelling in nurturing empathy and promoting social change through children's fiction.

Keywords: *inclusive, pedagogical, self-concept, discourse, diversity, disability*

The (Un)Conventionality of Disability: An Introduction

The depiction of impairment— whether oral, literal, or metaphorical- has frequently found its place within the literary canon. In tales that unfold alongside their more conventional counterparts i.e. "regular"



characters, these characters endeavor to establish unique realms of their own. However, the fictional spaces or roles assigned to them invariably differ from those occupied by their typical peers, underscoring a complex dynamic of representation and narrative function. In "Narrative Prosthesis," Mitchell and Snyder contend that impairment is employed in literature in the guise of "narrative prosthesis", functioning primarily in two ways: first, as a conventional element of characterization, and second, as a metaphorical device that is opportunistically utilized (Snyder, 2001). They suggest that disability functions as a narrative device that exposes and challenges the "normalizing truths" prevalent in society. It reveals the dependency of artistic and cultural discourses on the alterity assigned to individuals with disabilities, thus questioning established norms.

An illustrative example of narrative prosthesis can be found in the character of Quasimodo from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. Quasimodo, who is physically deformed and deaf, serves as a cogent narrative instrument that helps augment the themes of isolation, societal judgment, and the nature of beauty. Quasimodo's physical impairment is a defining characteristic that shapes his identity and experiences. His deformity elicits sympathy and revulsion from others, allowing the narrative to explore societal attitudes toward disability and difference. This characterization typifies a "stock feature," making him a poignant symbol of the marginalized.

Garland-Thomson's examination of the representation and construction of disability in *Extraordinary Bodies* similarly uncovers the widespread use of disability as a narrative device. Through an analysis of cultural artifacts, including literature, film, and television, Garland-Thomson demonstrates that culturally motivated representations of disablement aid a politics of the kind of appearance that is objectively normative- in which some traits, dispositions, and functions become the foible of inferiority or deviance that manifest elaborately, while others dwindle into a "neutral, disembodied, universalized norm". (Thomson, 2017)

Need of Study

The fundamental justification of this study stems from the pressing need to critically research how disabilities are portrayed in children's literature, specifically in R.J. Palacio's "Wonder," a well-known work that shapes young readers' opinions of people with disabilities. By employing Critical Discourse Analysis, this paper aims to uncover the underlying ideologies and societal norms reflected in the narrative, highlighting how such representations can either reinforce stereotypes or promote empathy and understanding.

Additionally, the story's examination of family dynamics sheds light on how crucial supportive settings are for building resilience in kids with disabilities. Ultimately, this paper seeks to enrich the scholarly dialogue surrounding disability representation in literature, advocating for inclusive educational practices that challenge prejudices and encourage kindness, thereby promoting a more accepting and empathetic society.

Objectives

- The analytical framework follows a three-part progression, with the first one focusing on how Auggie's physical attributes and disability affect his psychological growth and worldview. The study then looks at the Pullman family's coping mechanisms for Auggie's disability, using the Family Resilience theory to comprehend their adaptation techniques. The study concludes by examining how the classroom environment shapes perceptions of disability, with a central focus directed towards Auggie's interactions with his peers.



- A close reading of the novel will allow us to gauge how the novel depicts the impact of bullying, empathy, and inclusion on classroom dynamics.
- The study shall examine the novel's social and cultural commentary on disability, especially as it relates to prejudice, acceptance, and tolerance. to investigate how the book presents different viewpoints and questions conventional narratives about disability.
- Centering on reader response and impact, the paper will consider the novel's portrayal of disability influences readers' perceptions and attitudes.
- The paper examines the wider role that picture books, comics, and young adult novels play in fostering empathy, understanding, and social change in relation to a larger spectrum of inclusivity and cultural diversity in children's fiction.

Review of Literature

Throughout the last two decades, scholarly explorations of representations of disability in literature and film have emerged, offering more complex ways to understand and conceptualize the power of representation in relation to disability. Works such as David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (2000) and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1997) are foundational in approaching representations of disability. Angela M. Smith's *Hideous Progeny: Disability, Eugenics, and Classic Horror Cinema* (2011) adds to this growing interest in representations of disability, bringing specific focus to the early decades of horror cinema in the United States. In addition to these foundational works, Michael Bérubé's *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way We Read* (2016) proffers more formalist and narratological ways of reading disability.

Methodology

The paper shall appoint a qualitative approach focused on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how disability is portrayed in R.J. Palacio's "Wonder." The primary text will be analyzed in conjunction with supplementary materials, including academic articles, reviews, and critiques that discuss disability representation in literature. In addition to analysing the language and narrative structure used to depict the character of Auggie Pullman and his interactions with peers and family, the analysis will concentrate on identifying important disability-related themes, such as acceptance, bullying, and resilience. By employing CDA, the paper will uncover the underlying ideologies and societal norms that inform the portrayal of disability, revealing how these constructs influence readers' perceptions. Additionally, the dynamics of the Pullman family will be analyzed through the lens of Family Resilience Theory to highlight the role of familial support in Auggie's development and acceptance. To warrant that observations and conversations are conducted respecting subjective experiences, ethical considerations will be taken into account. Aiming to offer sagacity that may guide educational practices and foster empathy and understanding among young readers, the findings will be placed within the larger conversation on disability representation in children's literature.



Results and Discussion:

R. J. Palacio's Wonder: A Tryst With the (Extra) Ordinary

R.J. Palacio's "Wonder" is one such conventional narrative of acceptance, with an unconventional protagonist at the forefront. Palacio's novel begins with a scathing critique of society's looking glass, as Auggie Pullman, the novel's protagonist, establishes his (ab)normalcy. He regurgitates how painfully aware he is of him not being an "ordinary" child. He draws a non-negotiable line between what it is to do ordinary things, and to be ordinary. However severe his impairment is, Auggie Pullman- the ten-year old demure child *feels* ordinary inside. It is only the social gaze towards his impairment that makes his ordinariness somewhat uneasy to accept. Auggie proceeds to recount, with the unassuming gentleness of a ten years old child, the manner in which his physical disability alarms, even apprehends the people around him. As a matter of fact, Auggie's disability manifests itself both literally and metaphorically. In a literal sense, he is affected by a very rare syndrome named Treacher Collins Syndrome, which drastically affects his physiological structure of the face (Vimalan, 2024). He got affected by this syndrome when he was in the womb itself and was born with a malformed face, with tiny ears, misplaced eyes and an irregular mouth and jaw line. Additionally, Auggie's facial difference is metaphor for otherness, by the virtue of his incapacity to conform to socially constructed norms of beauty.

Primarily, August Pullman's disability is to be looked at through a societal mirror i.e. the manner in which his illness is perceived within his middle school classroom environment at Beecher Prep school. The classroom essentially acts as a threshold for August's ritual initiation into a sort of otherness. His first day at Beecher Prep is a significant moment where his disability is immediately apparent. As he enters the classroom, he experiences the stares and whispers of his classmates, which underscores the discomfort and curiosity surrounding his appearance. This moment sets the tone for his experiences in the school environment. Julian, Auggie's peer, stands as an embodiment of social prejudices that (more often than not) claim the minds of children. In a connotative remark within the classroom setting, Julian calls August "Darth Sidious". August's interactions with Julian further establish him as the other-ed classmate who is to be noticed, remarked against, but not talked to. "No one sat next to me...", states Auggie, his tone hinting submissive despondency. In Mr. Browne's class, Auggie is introduced to the concept of "precepts," which are moral lessons. This setting allows Auggie to share his thoughts and feelings about his disability indirectly through discussions about kindness and acceptance. Mr. Brown's precept that states, "when given the choice between being right and being kind, choose kind" (Palacio, 2012), acts as a presentiment for Auggie's subsequent acceptance by his immediate social circle in school.

According to psychological and developmental research, students with disabilities' perceptions of their academic and social competence are greatly influenced by social comparison processes. Low self-esteem and increased psychological vulnerability can originate from these learners' tendency of associating stigma with unfavourable social benchmarks (B.P. Ackerman, 2004). As a result, these learners tend to believe that they are not as intellectually strong as their peers who are relatively high achievers in regular classes. Auggie's homeschooling experience, on his first day in regular school, is very conveniently dismissed by his peer Julian as inconsequential. Julian, as a result, imposes on Auggie's body and mind, a false sense of inferiority. Infamously nicknamed as "the zombie kid", Auggie is classified as the untouchable other through a seemingly harmless game fashioned by his classmates called "The Plague". In this scenario, the classroom hierarchy is enforced through a cruel game of untouchability wherein students think that they must shun August and never physically touch him- lest they "catch the Plague" (Palacio, 2012). As is evident thus, Auggie's acceptance by his peers takes time in its coming.



These instances are a collective evidence of how the "Choose Kind" movement, promoted by the school, ultimately cultivates a supportive environment that enables Auggie to feel accepted and valued. On receiving the medal, Auggie makes a certain note: In relation to how visible his impairment is at the school, August realizes that the pity he is met with parallels the pity these peers would bestow to any paraplegic individual or any other non-verbal child. It is his subjective self-perception that allows him to think that he is ordinary. What others think has rarely ever mattered. He takes home the school's prize award with humor, observing that though he does not perform a great Hollywood trick such as "destroying a Death Star," successfully handling the challenges of fifth grade alone makes a huge achievement for any learner. (Palacio, 2012)

August Pullman's narrative thus comes full circle, beginning and ending with a tryst with ordinary-ness (or the lack thereof), and the absurd profoundness that surrounds such social notions. This underscores the transformative impact of friendship and kindness in addressing prejudice and fostering social inclusion. The ambivalence-amplification theory proposes that non-disabled individuals often nurture conflicting sentiments, from sincere empathy to underlying discomfort, when dealing with persons with disabilities (PWDs). This duality manifests as a combination of empathy and aversion. (Jenitta, 2024) An illustrative example is Jack, a student at Beecher School, who exhibits ambivalent feelings toward his classmate Auggie. Jack interacts with Auggie at first, enjoying his personality and sense of humour. However, he publicly denies their friendship in front of peers during a Halloween celebration, which has a profound impact on Auggie and ultimately causes him to stop attending school. This situation highlights the vital role that friends and family play in PWDs' lives as supporters and motivators because they frequently highlight their positive traits. On the other hand, societal attitudes that reflect a widespread ambivalence and prejudice frequently cause emotional harm to disabled people through both verbal and nonverbal actions.

The following excerpt from Shane Clifton's *Crippled Grace: Disability, Virtue Ethics, and the Good Life* articulates the harsh realities faced by PWDs in contemporary society:

"One problem of modern society, even with all its medical and technological wonders, is its implicit demand that we should live forever in perfect health. We keep our dead and dying out of sight; we abort babies that do not match our ideals of normalcy; we worship photoshopped images of beauty. In consequence, suffering, disability, and fragility come as a complete and utter shock. We just do not know what to do with them. In reality, however, there is no theological reason to assume that we should be immune to the consequences of biological existence." (Clifton, 2018)

The Pullman Family: A Case Study in the Poetics of the Family Resilience Theory

In R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*, the depiction of the Pullman family serves as a compelling illustration of family resilience theory, particularly in the context of addressing the challenges associated with Auggie's disability. Carolyn S. Henry and Amanda W. Harrist propound upon their idea of Family Resilience, which focuses on the capability of the family in "mobilizing or accessing capabilities to function effectively despite significant risk" (Kari Adamsons, 2022). According to this theory, family resilience is a multidimensional construct that encompasses (a) the ability to access and navigate culturally significant protective factors and (b) the demonstration of culturally relevant family functioning outcomes (or adaptations) in the face of substantial risks and vulnerabilities. For the Pullman family, Auggie's disability poses a "substantial risk" to the overall balance of familial intimacy, sociability and normalcy.

The Pullman family exemplifies a significant degree of adaptability in their daily lives, modifying routines and expectations to accommodate Auggie's needs and ensuring that he feels both supported and included.



Effective communication is a defining characteristic of their family dynamic, facilitating discussions about Auggie's experiences, fears, and successes, thereby creating an environment in which he feels secure in expressing himself. Additionally, the family enjoys the advantage of having a strong social support system, made up of friends, relatives, and schoolmates, which increases their resilience capacity. Their shared values, centered on kindness, acceptance, and love, guide their actions and decisions, enabling them to maintain a positive outlook even amidst adversity, as evidenced by their commitment to the "Choose Kind" philosophy. The Pullman family employs a variety of coping strategies to manage the stress associated with Auggie's disability, celebrating his achievements and engaging in family activities that reinforce their bond. Throughout the narrative, they emphasize Auggie's strengths and unique attributes rather than solely focusing on his disability, which empowers him and fosters a sense of pride. As the story progresses, the Pullman family undergoes personal and relational growth, acquiring valuable insights into empathy, acceptance, and the significance of mutual support. This growth not only fortifies their familial bond but also increases their ability to confront future challenges collectively.

The Pullmans thus, effectively portray "internal family strengths" that include, according to C.S. Henry and Amanda Harrist, *"nurturing and caring; connections to others; establishing and maintaining boundaries, expectations, and integrity; agency and active coping; regulation of self and family; hope, faith, and optimism; meaning-making and a sense of meaning of life; positive views of self and family; and rules and rituals"*.

Overall, the portrayal of the Pullman family in *Wonder* aligns closely with the fundamentals of family resilience theory, demonstrating the manner in which families can successfully steer across the complexities of disability while cultivating a supportive and nurturing environment.

Role of Educational Institutions in Curbing Prejudices Against Physical Disability

1. Encouraging Inclusive Education

- **Diverse Curriculum:** Schools should use a variety of literature, such as "Wonder" by R.J. Palacio, which has characters with disabilities. Students gain an understanding of and empathy for the experiences of people with impairments due to this exposure.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** For meeting the various needs of individual students, including children with physical disabilities, schools should use differentiated teaching techniques. This method creates a welcoming atmosphere where each student is encouraged and feels appreciated.

2. Fostering Empathy and Understanding

- **Empathy Training:** Educational institutions can put in place initiatives that foster empathy and motivate students to talk about disabilities and the value of kindness. Students can gain a more nuanced understanding of the difficulties faced by their peers with disabilities by participating in role-playing or storytelling exercises.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Educational establishments ought to plan events and campaigns to raise awareness of the experiences of people with disabilities. These programs may consist of workshops, community service projects, and guest lecturers who encourage tolerance and understanding.



3. Creating Supportive Environments

- **Safe Spaces:** Schools ought to set up areas where they may find space to express their feelings regarding disabilities without worrying about being judged. Support groups and counselling services that accommodate the emotional and psychological needs of specially-abled students are examples of this.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Students with and without disabilities can develop friendships by putting peer mentoring programs into place. These initiatives promote social interaction, assist in dismantling barriers, and lessen preconceptions and misconceptions.

4. Training Educators and Staff

- **Professional Development:** Teachers and staff should receive continual training on disability awareness, inclusive practices, and bias resolution from educational institutions. This training gives teachers the skillset required to address bullying and discrimination within and beyond the four walls of the classroom and foster an inclusive environment.
- **Modelling Inclusive Behaviour:** When interacting with students, educators should set an example of inclusive language and behaviour. Teachers can provide a good example for students to follow by acting with understanding and respect.

5. Encouraging Parental Involvement

- **Involving Families:** Schools ought to aggressively engage parents in conversations regarding inclusion and disabilities. Parents can learn the value of cultivating empathy and acceptance in the home through workshops and informational sessions.
- **Community Partnerships:** Working together with neighbourhood groups that aid individuals with impairments can improve educational initiatives and give families and students access to more resources.

6. Addressing Bullying and Discrimination

- **Unambiguous Policies:** Educational establishments must set up unambiguous anti-bullying guidelines that particularly address prejudice against children with disabilities. These guidelines ought to set out definitive penalties for bullying, and a well-mapped procedure for filing reports and dealing with such situations.
- **Proactive Interventions:** Before prejudices turn into bullying, schools should take proactive steps to recognise and address them. Regular evaluations of student attitudes towards disabilities and the school climate can be part of this.

7. Celebrating Diversity

- **Cultural Competence:** By embracing diversity in all its manifestations, including disability, schools can foster cultural competence. Students can learn about and gain an appreciation for the contributions made by people with disabilities through events like Disability Awareness Month.



- **Showcasing Success Stories:** Telling students about the achievements of people with disabilities can motivate them and dispel stereotypes. A more positive view of disability can be promoted and perceptions can be changed by showcasing accomplishments in a plethora of fields. In conclusion, educational institutions play a significant role in curbing prejudices against physical disabilities by promoting inclusive education, fostering empathy, creating supportive environments, training educators, engaging families, addressing bullying, and celebrating diversity. Using these methods, schools will develop an accepting and understanding environment, eventually creating a more tolerant society.

Conclusion:

Representation, in any form or format, is inevitably political. Representations of impairment in youth literature and media, inform and are informed by complex constellations of politics relating to various aspects of identity formation, social engagement, and dialogues around the body, illness, disability, life, and death. This list is in no way exhaustive; however, these political aspects of children and young adult-oriented literature are inherently concerned with the place of and anxieties about the body in texts and their potential impact on audiences. Discussions of these issues, however, are nonetheless specifically contextualized; the desired effects of such representations shift significantly depending upon the historical and geo-political periods under consideration. So too, it should be assumed that representations reflect and refract the politics of their periods of production and in relation to their implied audiences. While representations of disability in adult-oriented literature, films, and television have been scrutinized, those in children's literature and youth-oriented films and TV shows have not received the same attention.

In conclusion, R.J. Palacio's novel *Wonder* offers a profound exploration of disability through the experiences of Auggie Pullman and the dynamics of his family. The analysis reveals that Auggie's physical appearance and disability significantly influence his psychological development, shaping his self-perception and interactions with peers. His journey illustrates the challenges of navigating a world that often prioritizes superficial judgments over intrinsic worth, highlighting the emotional toll of societal perceptions on individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the examination of the Pullman family's coping mechanisms through the lens of Family Resilience theory underscores their adaptability and resilience amidst great adversity. The family's ability to communicate openly, access social support, and emphasize shared values fosters a nurturing environment that empowers Auggie and promotes resilience. Ultimately, *Wonder* not only highlights the nuanced intricacies of living with a bodily deformity but also foregrounds the importance of empathy, acceptance, and the transformative power of familial support in overcoming challenges. Through this dual analysis, this paper seeks to highlight how the novel functions as a poignant reminder of the need to be deliberately, joyously, and infectiously kind and understanding in a world that is cruel, hence the promotion of inclusiveness in which people are loved not based on how they look but rather who they are.

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Music and Body Image

Steffi Burns, Dr. Suparna Ghosh

Abstract

The association between music and body image is complicated and consists of an interplay of influences. Music has the capacity to affect the norms of the community, targeting those that are related to one's appearance and body ideals. Music has the power to make one feel empowered and confident and help them accept themselves the way they are. On the other hand, music can make an individual dissatisfied with their body and appearance. The perception and understanding of how one may look at his or her body depends on several factors like exposure to music videos, its lyrics and how the artists are portrayed in the videos.

This work will attempt to explore the intricate relationship between music and body image and highlight how music is used as a tool for objectification and how the idea of the "perfect" body type may lead an individual to suffer both mentally and physically.

This study dives into the depth of these issues and determines if the relationship between body image, music and the inter-connected impacts are identified by the students in higher education. Further, it investigates if these topics are addressed by the educational institutions and advocates to encourage dialogue on the concerned topic.

Keywords: *music, body image, dissatisfaction, sexual, videos*

Objectives

1. To understand how music and music videos frame one's opinion about body image and also those of others.
2. To study the positive and negative effects of music on women, men, adolescents, and transgender.
3. To analyze how music is used as a tool for sexualization and objectification.
4. To understand how music videos affect the understanding of the "perfect" body.
5. To study the effects of music on physical and mental health.
6. To see if body neutrality could be the solution.

Methodology

The methodology is qualitative in nature. Secondary data like journals, research articles and various studies from the internet have been studied extensively. Further, a survey has been conducted to highlight the profound influence of music on students pursuing higher education and graphical representations of the same has been shown.

Introduction

Music is the art that is produced by using vocal and instrumental sounds for the beauty of form or emotional expression. It usually follows the cultural standard of melody, rhythm and harmony. Music is humanely



engineered; it is conceptual and auditory. Music is the art that permeates every society and it is a protean art as it lends easily to alliances with words (songs) and with physical movement (dance). Modern music is heard in a bewildering profusion of styles many of them contemporary and others engendered in the past. Through time immemorial, music has held profound influence in ritual and drama and as highlighted in several studies, it also holds the capacity to reflect and alter human emotions.

The American Psychological Association identifies body image as an individual's perception about their body and the emotions one feels regarding it. Likewise, Jessica Cortez explains that body image is what an individual thinks and envisions about themselves. It influences how they view themselves and discuss about their physical attributes, both in private and in public. Body positivity refers to the idea when one feels safe and has a positive opinion or outlook about their body irrespective of their shape and size. In contrast, body image that focuses on a dissatisfaction with their overall appearance, engaging in behavior such as frequent mirror checking, self-weighing or avoidance of public situations is generally tagged as negative body image.

Need For the Study

To explore the multidimensional relationship between body image, music and how media content shapes the attitude, personal beliefs, and behavioral patterns in an individual is an aspect that requires immediate attention. Such a study also sheds light on the role of media as to how it shapes the standards and norms of the people. Therefore, this study attempts to unveil the impact of music on mental health and daily life. This work will look closely at the detrimental messages and will also advocate regarding more inclusion of all body types in the industry and conscientious messages.

The paper strives to highlight the need for a responsible and awareness in the creation of music videos and music and fosters among the students of higher education to develop an informed choice of consumption and frame a positive perception about themselves.

What makes this work crucial is that it equips the learners with the ability to observe and recognize the dangerous messages and helps bring about inclusivity and empathy. It also stresses on why institutions must adopt strategies to increase awareness, foster sensitivity and help students make responsible and informed choices.

Review of Literature

Nina. (n.d.). How Music Can Change the Way You Feel and Act. edition.cnn.com. Retrieved November 13, 2023.

Contemporary studies have brought forward how music has the strength to influence one's mind and body. It holds the power to impact illness like depression, anxiety and affect productivity and expenditure. Studies conducted recently have addressed the alarming effects of music exposure that leads individuals to harbor aggressive thoughts and unfavorable self-perception. Through an experiment at the University of Groningen, researchers have established that listening to delighting or sorrowful tunes does not only help change one's mood but also what they begin to observe. This happens the sensory stimuli affects the frame of mind. Levitin is of the opinion depression can be treated with music. Music that has softer and optimistic tunes helps energize an individual.



Marika. (2016). Sexual Content in Music's Relationship with Consumers' Body Image, Sexualization and Objectification. Stars. Library. Retrieved November 16, 2023.

One's social reality can be driven from what they see or listen to. Many music artists can become role models and it is common for young girls to emulate their idols. However, when the artists do not portray a positive behavior themselves, strong influence on the young audience can be harmful. In certain genres like pop, rap and hip-hop it is common to find sexually suggestive lyrics in songs along with power, sexism and violence. Moreover, media reports in the UK suggest that availability and popularity of more interactive media such as music videos among adolescents are increasing.

Demeaning messages of men in power over women, sex as top priority for men, objectification and sexual violence against women, women being defined by men and women under-valuing themselves are often observed in Rap and Pop songs. The sexual role of women is to please men and this relays the message that women exist as sexual objects and their value depends on their physical appearance. The harmful content consumed may have detrimental effects on both men and women, and may reinforce a thought among men that the opposite gender appreciates violence in relationships. L.M Ward Suggest that 71% of the music videos have sexual content. Another research by E.M Volgman shows that once young women view media that leads to self-objectification, they internalize it which leads to a preoccupation with one's appearance and anxiety.

Exposure to body image ideals that do not physically match the average person and may be influential or detrimental to young girls. Mischner and colleagues established that when young girls are exposed to such media contents, they might begin to feel discontented with their bodies and feel more pressured to achieve the "perfect" body. This affects their body image and might affect how they see or feel for other women. It may make them view other women with better bodies with hatred.

Coyne, S. M., Davis, E. J., Warburton, W., Stockdale, L., Abba, I., & Busby, D. M. (2020). Mirror on the Wall: The Effect of Listening to Body Positive Music on Implicit and Explicit Body Esteem, Psychology of Popular Media, Advance online publication. scholarsarchive.byu.edu. Retrieved December 9, 2023.

This study suggests that appearance-based music lyrics had in adult women multiple realms of body satisfaction. Recent studies and works have shown how both music videos and music may bring a change in a woman's attitudes and behavior. Literature suggests that music impacts both explicit and implicit self-esteem and woman in particular use music for empowerment and personal growth. Other research suggests that lyrics affects behavior more than musical tone, suggesting that message matters. This study emphasizes on the negative messages that are infused in lyrics of the songs or the music videos that contribute to poor body image or lower self-esteem among women, leading to inadequate feelings or a belief system concerning their appearance. Besides, signs of body positivity are observed when woman were exposed to positive lyrics especially when paired with music video.

Beth, Rebecca, & Helga. (2007). The Impact of Thin Models in Music Videos in Adolescent Girl's Body Dissatisfaction. researchgate.net Publications. Retrieved December 9, 2023.

Music videos also depict socio-cultural ideals of the "perfect" body often highlighting scantily clad models whose dance movements further highlights the shape, size and proportions of their body. Growing evidence of unrealistic body ideals has detrimental effects on adolescent girl's body image. Mass media are a pervasive force in shaping body ideals and sensitizing adolescent girls to achieve a perfect body which is central to women identity when they are in phase of transition to womanhood. Though not all music videos feature ultra-thin models yet videos that feature all-girls-bands are



marketed to appeal to adolescent girls. The distinctive aspect of this work is its investigations on how models featured in the music videos lead young women to compare themselves with those in videos and how it influences their body image. This comparison was absent among women who listened to the audio-only content.

Chrysalis, Francesca, Lesley, Cougar, Megan, & Wayne. (n.d.). "Where My Boys At?", The Need To Examine How Portrayals of Men in Popular Music Impact Male Body Image and Self Esteem. div46amplifier.com. Retrieved December 9, 2023.

Though there exists quite some research works concentrating on media influences, there is hardly much data to help grasp how popular music affects men. Issues relating to self-perception among men have been studied less as compared to women. Findings advocate that when exposed to popular music content men tend to frame an understanding of gender norms, attitude toward women, social attitudes, opinion relating to sexual harassment, permissive sexual values, permitted violence against women and border sexual behavior. Blond (2008) observed the increased representation of well-groomed, trimmed, muscular and sexually objectified male bodies cause high level of dissatisfaction causing males vulnerable to eating disorders, dieting, muscle dysmorphia, steroid use and cosmetic surgery.

Mulgrew, Volcevski & Rendell. (2013). The Effect of Music Video Clips on Adolescent Boys Body Image, Mood and Schema Activation. researchgate.net Publications. Retrieved December 8, 2023.

Adolescence is a period that is thought to be a crucial developmental stage when an individual deals and develops their body image. This is also a period when issues related to body image have been reported. In comparison to young women or girls the rate of dissatisfaction with their body remains low among young boys or young men. Studies that were conducted in Australia have concluded that young boys' usually raise concern regarding their weight, muscularity, and overall body size. They therefore, engaged in excessive exercise, dietary supplements or steroid use. It is through music video clips which contain violent and aggressive acts and muscular singers having ideal male body have shown adverse effects on adolescents.

Body Image-Music. (n.d.). mediasmarts.ca. Retrieved December 8, 2023.

It is due to heavily ripped physique that standards among male hip-hop, heavy metal and even country singers that inspire young teenagers to aim for a "perfect" body thereby putting them at a risk of turning to bodybuilding which might be harmful under certain circumstances.

Negative Body Image: Causes, Consequence and Intervention Ideas, Report Prepared By 2CV for the Government Equality Office. (2019). assets.publishing.service.gov.uk. Retrieved December 10, 2023.

Research states that historically, black women have more flexible and multifaceted definition of attractiveness that has led to greater social acceptance. However, portrayal of "fit and skinny" black women in media especially music leads to body dissatisfaction. Studies have shed light to wide representation of lesbian and bisexual women in mass media, which has put similar mainstream pressures on women to have a thin body. According to a meta-analytical review, gay men face cultural expectations that pressurize them and make them feel miserable with their body weight and which in turn leads them to evaluate and compare themselves based on heterosexual male standards. This primarily happens as they belong to a stigmatized group and cause them anxiety, stress and mental problems.



Zahabia. (2019, March). Objectification of Women in Bollywood Item Numbers. digitalcommons.usf.edu. Retrieved April 18, 2023.

There exists many studies that have concluded that music videos adversely affect young girls although they are a significant medium that upholds the culture of the community. Bollywood item numbers have usually sexualized and objectified the artists in order to appeal to the audiences. This study showed that 89.6% of songs had lead artists dressed provocatively to attract male viewers. It resulted in high crime rates like rape and molestation and men find it acceptable to post misogynistic comments and body shame women.

Within health, Rhythmic influences: The Relationship between Music and Body Image. (n.d.). withinhealth.com. Retrieved December 4, 2023.

Many celebrities have advocated their support for the body positive movement that celebrates bodies of all shapes, gender, abilities and expression. The Grammy winning artist Lizzo is known for encouraging fans to reject body shaming stereotypes through her music. The list is followed by Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, Adel and Beyonce. It is reported that songs by Rock bands like Queen, Guns N' Roses make listeners feel comfortable about their body along with Metallica, Tool, Nirvana who produced Pop and 90's music.

The song that generated most confidence among listeners is 'Confident' by Demi Levato followed by 'Flowers' by Miley Cyrus. Besides, the list includes Ariana Grande, Drake and Imagine Dragons. These and many other songs in this category feature songs that feature lyrics regarding strong individuals who reject outdated beauty standards in favor of creating their own. On the other hand, artists who have produced songs based on negative body image are Body in the water, LANY, Billie Eilish, Lana Del Rey etc.

Moira, & Allison. (n.d.). Yes, what you think about how you look affects your health and well being. everydayhealth.com. Retrieved December 8, 2023.

Body image that is negative may cause detrimental impacts on one's health and mind and it is humanely impossible to hold an image of positivity all the time. Therefore, a simpler and healthy approach is body neutrality where the body of an individual is respected and the focus is shifted from what the body looks like to what the body is capable of doing suggests DeCero. Too much emphasis on the body way cause difficulties and so a neutrality must be maintained that benefit the wellbeing of people points Engler.

Kristen. (2022, June 30). Body Positivity vs. Body Neutrality. verywellmind.com. Retrieved April 18, 2024.

Body neutrality is an approach different from that of body positivity as it focuses more accepting the non-physical characteristics of the body. This is a good approach when feeling positive does not feel genuine and does not pressure an individual to love the body but to only accept it and find ways to appreciate it.

One can observe the intricate connection between music and body image and its influence on how one perceives oneself and others. However, how students view their bodies or their perception and understanding of body image is yet to be explored. Therefore, as already mentioned, this work tries to explore the profound influence of music on students pursuing higher education. The findings are based



on a questionnaire and analysis of secondary sources that probes the intricate connection and highlights the dynamic interplay between music and body image on students pursuing higher education.

Findings

Over generations one may notice how music has changed and shaped cultures and societies. The power of music can alter one's mood, change perception and inspire. Each listener forms a personal connection with music and it must be mentioned that its impact lies beyond society and culture. Though its effects may be difficult to trace at the onset, it does possess the capacity to shape significantly our emotions and mood. It gives us energy, soothes us, encourages and inspires us. It is crucial to understand that the effects of music are not always positive. There might be instances when music contributes to discomfort, anxiety and depression or dissatisfaction with one's physical attributes. Exposure to music videos and objectification as well as exposure to sexual content in the music videos leads to negative body image and decreased self-esteem.

This paper seeks to understand the current socio-cultural structure revolves around body image. From a very young age an individual is exposed to various forms of media out of which music holds an important position. Music and music videos not only frame our attitude towards ourselves but also how we look at people or what we tend to think about them. Through music videos the idea to stay fit and healthy has spread but when an individual compares their body with those they see or hear about and try to imitate them, it raises concern.

Body image is rather a complex phenomenon and what one feels about their body is even more complicated as it directly affects their mental and physical wellbeing. Research has established that lyrics and music videos affect women in both positive and negative ways, yet, several women find themselves being too concerned about what others think of them. Adolescents too tend to observe and imitate what they see which leads adolescent females to try transforming themselves into more "slim and fit" type for greater acceptability among peer groups and the society at large. Further, some content pushes one to think that a woman is only validated when she pleases a man and does what is expected of her. This in turn, diminishes the independence and individuality of women and leads to objectification.

In contrast, one finds that men also undergo serious pressure to maintain a "perfect body" which hampers their body image, but not much investigations have shed light on this. Sexualized lyrics and related imagery have led men to think that idealized bodies are needed. This simultaneously affects their mental health starting from depression, anxiety, body dysmorphia and dissatisfaction to suicide. Adolescent boys also go through such difficulties. However, facing psycho-sexual issues in the formative years of their life is a concern to be catered to. There are ample literatures that represent and confirm how women feel; however, as far as men or adolescent boys are concerned not much research is undertaken which makes it difficult to come up with effective solutions. Lyrical content and music videos shape the attitude and perception among men further affecting how they navigate their relations with women. Additionally, exposure to them affects the young viewers and adult viewers. It leads to misogynistic ideas further pressurizing women and raises crime rates.

The study establishes how the body positive movement is bringing in a wave of music that promotes self-love and acceptance of all people irrespective of their facial features, skin tone or body type. In some occasions, one might believe that some music videos or lyrics of songs may shame those with good bodies or fair skin tones while promoting body positivity. This too has harmful effects. Besides, it also leads one to be preoccupied with appearance undermining other aspects that make us complex. Therefore, an effective solution to these problems is to advocate body neutrality. This means that instead of listening to songs related to appearance one can listen to neutral songs.



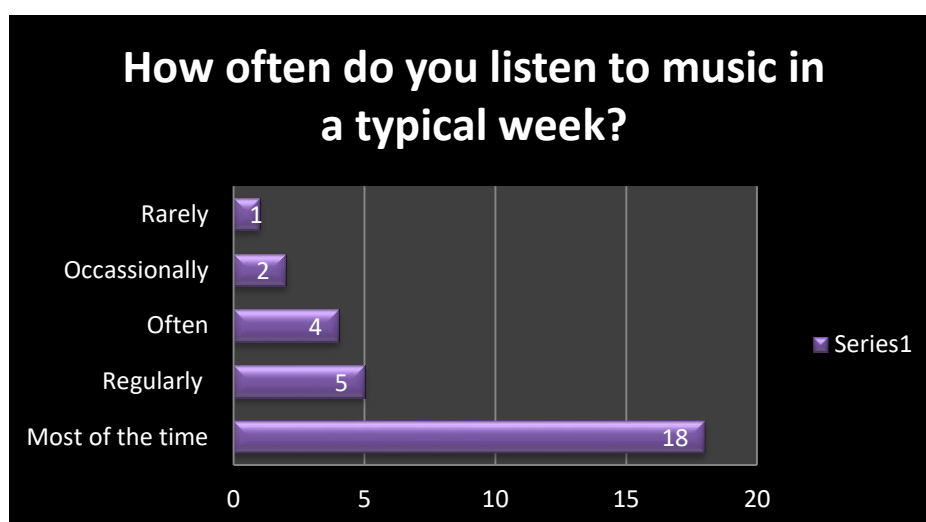
The survey that was conducted received a total of 30 respondents out of which 13 were male students and 17 were female students. All students are studying at the undergrad level in various reputed institution. Another observation is that learners are exposed to music very often in a week and many of them are aware that music influence their perception about body image and almost all of them experience changes in mood or self-esteem after listening to certain genres. Many participants have revealed that they understand that body neutrality can be achieved through music. Additionally, some respondents have acknowledged consistent pressure to fit into the body standards while others have never felt it. Most of the students are either influenced by celebrity body images portrayed in music industry or they are not at all influenced.

One questions in the survey invited respondents to share their personal experiences where music contributed to a change in perception relating to their body image. Out of several responses, 2 responses have been mentioned below.

Respondent 1: "Well I grew up in a family where I was constantly body shamed even if it was due to my DNA...I fell into depression and tried changing myself a lot and did a self-harm in the process. But then after I started listening to stray kids and their songs it made me feel so much comfortable in my own skin...Yes it took years but I'm confident in myself now and I don't try to fit into any standard...In a way they saved me so I really believe music does have that strength."

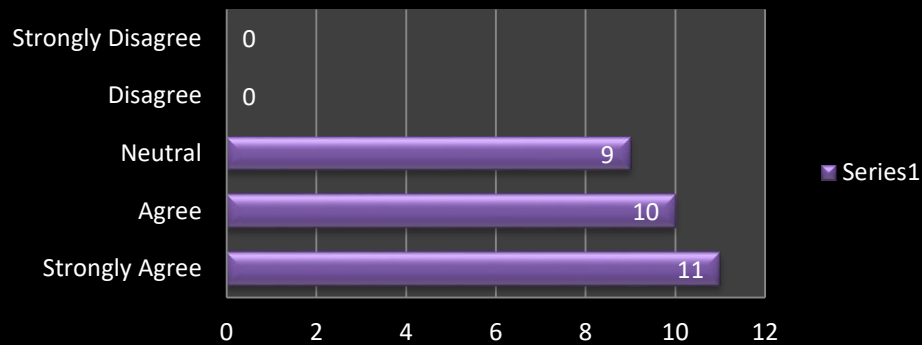
Respondent 2: "Immersed in the powerful beats and captivating melodies of ancient Indian tunes, the tales of Suryaputra Karna from Mahasharata and the divine exploits of Hanuman, resonated deeply through my headphones. Fueled by the powerful emotions evoked by the music, I felt an unwavering resolve to embark on a journey of self-transformation. The echoes of Suryaputra Karna and divine Hanuman in the music fueled not just a physical transformation but a holistic journey towards embodying the indomitable spirit of these revered figures."

Although to help a child develop holistically NEP 2020 has emphasized the need for music in higher studies as it can help foster diversity and creativity yet what is striking is that anything related to music or body image is not discussed at schools or colleges but several respondents are interested in educational programsthat would foster their understanding about the world of music and body image.

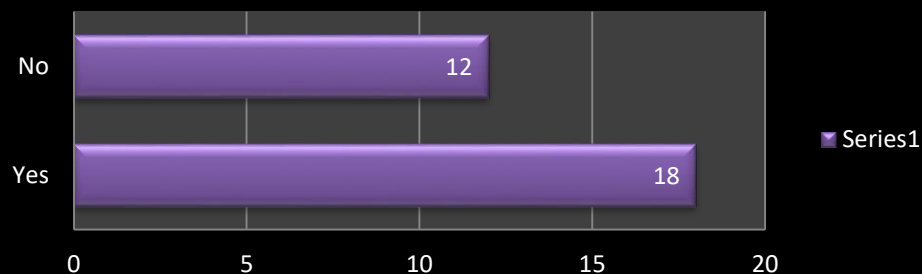




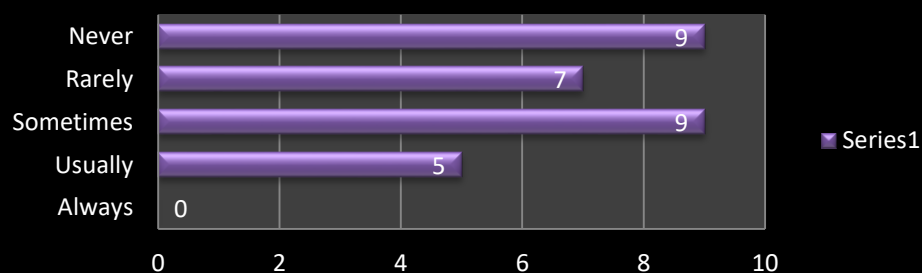
Do you believe that music you listen to influences your perception of body image?



Are you aware of any specific music genres or artists that promote positive body messages?

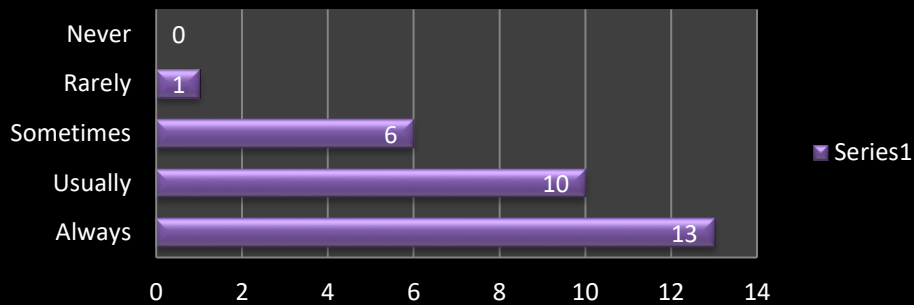


Have you ever felt pressure to fit into a certain body standard based on the music you listen to?

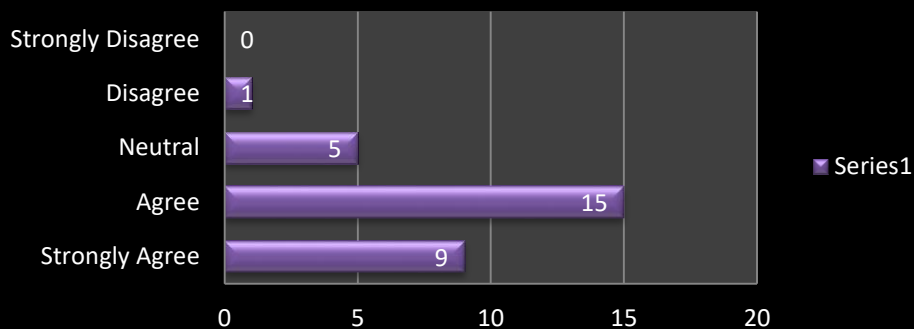




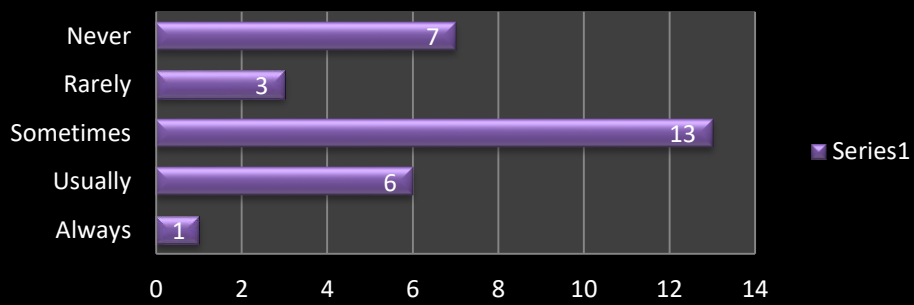
Have you ever experienced changes in your mood or self esteem after listening to certain type of music?

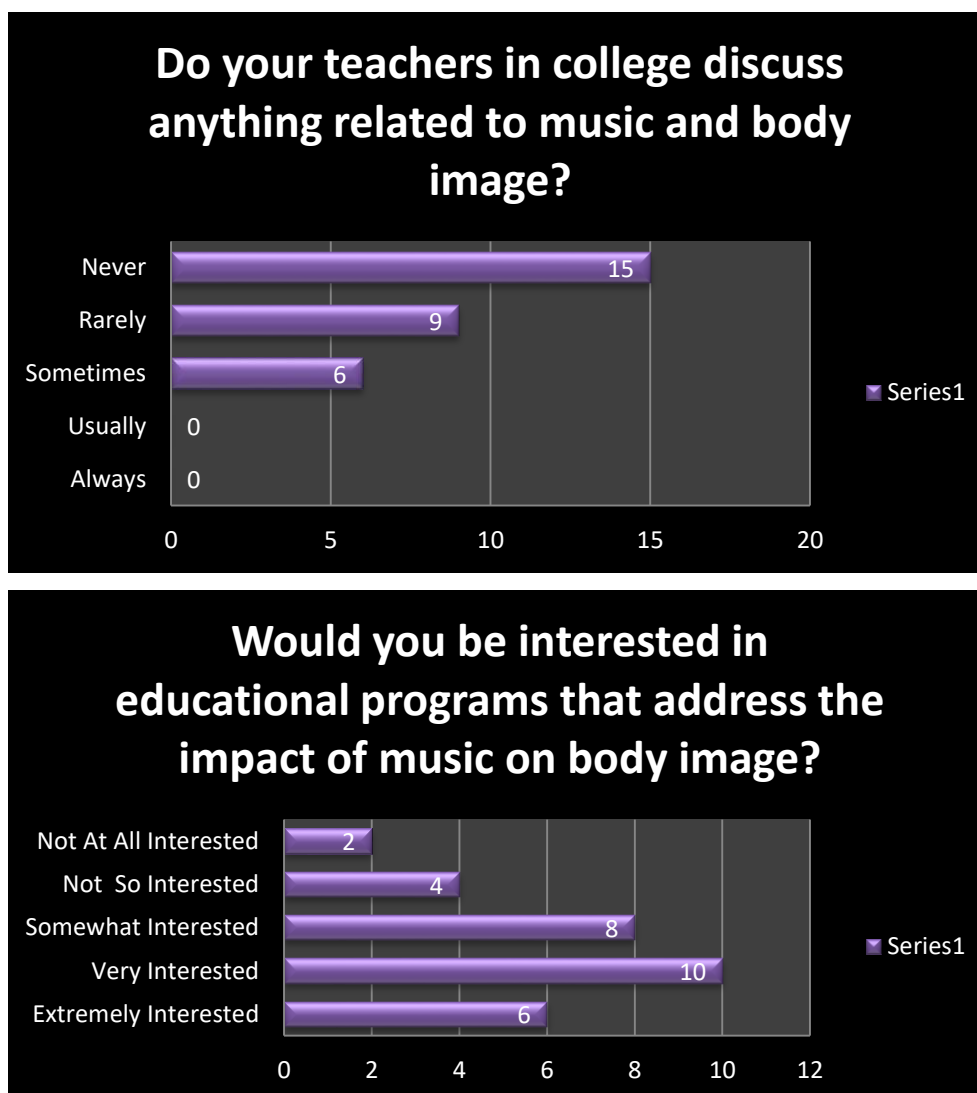


Do you think music can play a role in promoting body neutrality and diversity?



Are you influenced by celebrity body images portrayed in the music industry?





Pedagogy

Higher education offers several courses and all courses deal with several topics that intersect with the theme of the paper. The domination of music on beauty standards and body image can be incorporated within classroom discussions when teaching or approaching the topics mentioned below. Our education system offers several courses to students pursuing higher education. However, only three disciplines have been discussed in this paper.

Sociology

CC1	Types of culture popular, elitist, folk and consumer cultures, pluralism and multiculturalism, culture and personality. Sociology and Psychology
CC7	Sociology of gender and sexuality (entire paper)



CC11	Social fact: Suicide
CC12	Research method (encourage students to study music and its effects on body image of individuals and that of society)
SEC	Masculinity and femininity

Psychology

CC4	Psychology of individual differences Self and identity Self enhancement
CC7	Social psychology Social perception, attitudes, attitude and behavior link Social influence
CC8	Understanding Psychological disorders Normality and abnormality Anxiety disorders Mood disorders, eating disorders Anti social personality disorders
CC10	Social influences on behavior
CC11	Phobias and depression
CC12	Stages of lifespan development Family, peers, Media and schooling
DSE	Happiness and well being, positive affect and positive emotions Health psychology Culture, self and others – Who am I, Who are they? Progressive education Role of teacher Inclusive education
SEC	Stress Management

History

CC4	Position of women in Medieval Europe
CC5	Bhakti (discuss devotional songs and draw parallels to the songs produced today)
CC6	Italian Renaissance and its impact on art
CC7	Bhakti movements and women bhaktas
CC13	Debates around gender Popular movements



DSE	History of Bengal Black movements in the USA Afro-American women
SEC	Understanding popular culture Folk art, music- folk songs The impact of the internet and audio-visual media

A general pedagogical approach

Integrate principles from psychology, sociology and media to foster a holistic understanding of relationship between music and body image and providing a multi-disciplinary integration.

By inviting guest speakers from music industry, psychology and media studies to help students understand and gain insights as to how music content is created and its influence of societal perceptions of body image would enhance the understanding of students.

Organizing workshops where students collaboratively analyze and interpret the collected data, applying statistical techniques to draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of music on diverse groups and individuals would engage students in active learning.

By conducting sessions encouraging students to critically analyze various research papers and questionnaire responses, will foster discussions on the societal implication and potential shifts in attitudes toward body image influenced by music.

The above-mentioned methods and pedagogical programs will benefit students theoretically but will enhance practical knowledge and will strengthen critical thinking and analysis.

Students must be encouraged to be thankful for what wonders the body can do and not what it looks like should be the approach. The educator must highlight that all people come in different shapes, sizes and appearance and all are beautiful and worthy of respect. One must encourage focusing on character, talents rather than physical beauty. An open and safe environment must be created to that allows students to speak without fear about how they feel or what they think. Teachers must encourage critical and analytical thinking among learners and help create positive perceptions and promote inclusivity based on body image while discussing how unrealistic standards seen in media can be misleading. It must be brought to notice that self-worth is crucial and all individuals deserve respect despite their weaknesses. Finally, the educator must mindful of their attitude toward body image and lead by example.

Suggestion

It is crucial to note that media affects the mental state and affects everyone including women and men and adolescents, those of the LGBTQAI+ and other stigmatized and BIPOC communities. Despite men, adolescents, LGBTQAI+ communities and BIPOC communities playing a significant part of our society, it has been noticed that no research is conducted to see how much music affects their body image and whether it makes them feel positive or stimulates negative thoughts and therefore, research is required in this field. The society also consists of the disabled and the ethnic groups who are under-represented



in the music and music videos and when they are exposed to such sexualized lyrics and imagery it certainly impacts their mental health. But whether the impact is beneficial or contradictory is yet to be established.

Conclusion

The findings have attempted to explore the relationship between music and body image which is not an area that has been much investigated. Nevertheless, the present work tried to navigate the impact of music on women, men, adolescents and others from various groups through a multidisciplinary approach which broke conventional boundary and tried providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic under scrutiny.

Through the review of literature, we saw the profound impact of music on societal attitudes of body image. As the findings suggest, that music industry plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions, the research provides foundation for further discussion and the pedagogical approach engages students in active learning. In this ever-evolving music industry this study is relevant for educators, policy makers and industry professionals.

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Status of Women in Predominantly Matrilineal and Patriarchal States in India With Respect To Literacy and Employment

Vishakha Banerjee, Dr. Rupa Ghosh

Abstract

Delving into a topic of high social value, this paper attempts to determine the impact of differing gender-based roles and responsibilities of women in different societies. This analysis is arguably the need of the hour to realize how the social norms mold the quality of lives of women. Resources need to be dedicated to gather evidence on the same and pave the way for discussions to implement changes for the betterment of women. The real picture must be brought into the light and acknowledged for society to be able to truly empower women. The focus, here, is on matrilineal and patriarchal forms of society, with vastly differing status, treatment and opportunities for women. The aim of the paper is to draw a comparison between the relative positions of women in these societies, analyse their spillover effects on the literacy and workforce participation of the resident women and highlight the strong interdependence between the disciplines of Economics and Sociology. This study has employed secondary data for its analysis. A sample of states, representing each of the societies, has been selected based on their general observable characteristics in addition to the rankings on the India Patriarchy Index. The 2011 Census data on state-wise literacy and workforce participation rates are used to study the engagement of women in these areas. The results of this examination, for the most part, are consistent with the perceived reality and traits of these societies, with partial inconsistencies in some aspects. While the literacy rates of women are much higher in the matrilineal states, their employment status reveals a different story. The workforce participation of women in the rural areas is greater in the patriarchal states, whereas the matrilineal states witness higher employment of women in the urban areas.

Such unexpected inconsistencies have widened the possibility for detailed exploration in the future.

Keywords: *matrilineal, patriarchal, literacy, workforce participation, women*

Introduction:

Societal influence has a huge bearing on the status of its resident women in any economy. While economic factors contribute significantly, the social structure and norms are responsible for properly defining their status. This is vividly evident in the varying roles, rights and choices that women can exercise in different societies despite the universal laws. This paper attempts to review these differences as a consequence of the existing structure of society and kinship. The focus, here, is on two types of social construct – the matriarchal/matrilineal type and the patriarchal/patrilineal type. In this regard, it is important to first establish the broad differences between them before advancing with their impacts.



Matriarchal societies are characterised by matriarchal families which are 'mother-centred' or 'mother-dominated'. The eldest woman serves as the 'head of household' and all authority resides with her. Property is owned and inherited by women (daughters over sons) with the lineage or descent being matrilineal in nature

i.e. traced through the maternal side. Women, either in consultation with male maternal relations or not, wield the power in terms of governance, economic decision-making, marriage and family structure etc. Furthermore, such families are matrilineal where a woman resides in her mother's home after marriage while the husband stays with his sister and is a 'privileged visitor' at his wife's place. The status of the children, consequently, is determined by that of their mothers.

Conversely, patriarchal societies, characterised by patriarchal families, are 'father-centred' or 'father-dominated'. The descent, inheritance and succession are recognised through the male line, making them patrilineal in nature. The eldest male member is the 'head of household' dictating terms for all other members. He exercises primary authority over any and all matters pertaining to family, property, governance etc. The families are patrilineal wherein sons continue to reside in their fathers' homes after marriage and the wives join them there. Moreover, the sons inherit property, in some cases contingent on the whims and fancies of their fathers. Children, in general, are considered those of the fathers with the mothers being practically ignored.

These differences significantly dictate the role of women and the opportunities available to them. Proceeding forward, this paper explores the impact of these societies on the literacy and employment of the resident women.

Need of the study:

1. To compare the difference between the standing of women in matrilineal vs. patriarchal societies.
2. To analyse the effect of the social system on the literacy and workforce participation of women.
3. To draw a correlation between the disciplines of Economics and Sociology with respect to this.

Review of Literature:

Matrilineal and patrilineal social structures find a greater visibility in the tribal communities of India. Women empowerment greatly vary between them. While women in the latter are empowered with respect to their attitude to violence, those in the former experience a relatively greater freedom of movement, decision-making power and social independence. (Mal & Saikia, 2024). The matrilineal tribal women in Meghalaya are seen to be more prone to choosing a competitive environment than men. (Gneezy, Leonard & List, 2009). Employment rates there seem to be soaring due to the fewer restrictions on their movement outside home. (Mukherjee, 1974).

Studies reveal that land is a major, if not the only, asset that rural women can use as collateral to acquire bank loans. (Toro, 2016). This ownership of land is more empowering when it is obtained through lineage as opposed to being given by the village administration as the latter lacks any ownership rights. Furthermore, women acquiring land through lineage are more encouraged to explore the idea of a savings account and also join socio-economic groups that aim to eradicate poverty and empower women economically, socially, physically and mentally. (Keeni, Takashino, Nongkynrih & Fuyuki, 2018).



With respect to the domains of educational attainment level, newspaper reading and economic empowerment, though women from both societies fare poorly, matrilineal tribal women are relatively better off. (*Mal & Saikia, 2024*). Patriarchal control on women's education reflects the gender-based inequalities in education. Education of females receives less attention and emphasis than the men. They do not get the same opportunities to acquire marketable skills and knowledge. In fact, they are pushed to the extent that women discriminate against each other, thereby further limiting their opportunities. (*Sultana, 2010*).

The tribal economy is largely dependent on forests and related economic activities like hunting, gathering, agriculture, handicrafts etc. There is an interrelation and interdependence between forest and tribals. The women are responsible for the management of the economy and family. They act as collectors, users and sellers of different forest products to earn wages for supplementing their family's requirements. (*Lama & Bhui, 2018*).

Additionally, women in Meghalaya, particularly Shillong, have always played a vital part in the existence and administration of the state. They attribute their relatively higher status to their innate ability to reason and dispense wisdom, but more importantly, to their matrilineal society. Women are highly influential and powerful outside their homes and enjoy complete security, unlike in most of the Indian states. They manage majority of the small businesses. A successful career woman of the Khasi tribe has credited their 'societal anomaly' as an important determinant of her success. There is ample scope in a society like this to encourage and enable women's participation and empowerment in all areas of development like administration, businesses, marketplaces, politics etc. (*Lyngdoh, 2022*).

Methodology:

For this comparative analysis, certain states exhibiting the requisite social structures have been selected as samples. Meghalaya and Kerala have been chosen as representative of predominantly matrilineal societies, while Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan represent predominantly patriarchal societies. The choice of these states is based not just on the predominance mentioned above, but also on their position on the India Patriarchy Index (*Singh, Chokhandre, Singh, Barker Kumar, McDougal, ... & Raj, 2021*). It is a modification of the Patriarchy Index developed in Europe (*Gruber & Szoltysek, 2016*).

Reliant on National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data, it assesses the following five domains to infer the widespread presence of patriarchy in a place.

- Domination of men over women – the variables included are
 - Proportion of female headed households
 - Proportion of young brides
 - Proportion of wives older than their husbands
- Generation domination of the older generation over the younger one – the variables are
 - Proportion of elderly men co-residing with a younger head of household
 - Proportion of neo-local residence among young men
 - Proportion of elderlies living with married sons
- Patrilocality – the variable is
 - Proportion of elderlies living with married daughters

- Son preference – the variables are
 - Proportion of boys among the last birth
 - Sex ratio in the youngest age-group
 - Percentage of women reporting a higher ideal number of son(s) than that of daughter(s)
- Socio-economic domination (imbalance between men and women in households with respect to earning and control over money and education) – the variables included are
 - Proportion of wives more educated than their husbands
 - Proportion of working age women engaged in professional work

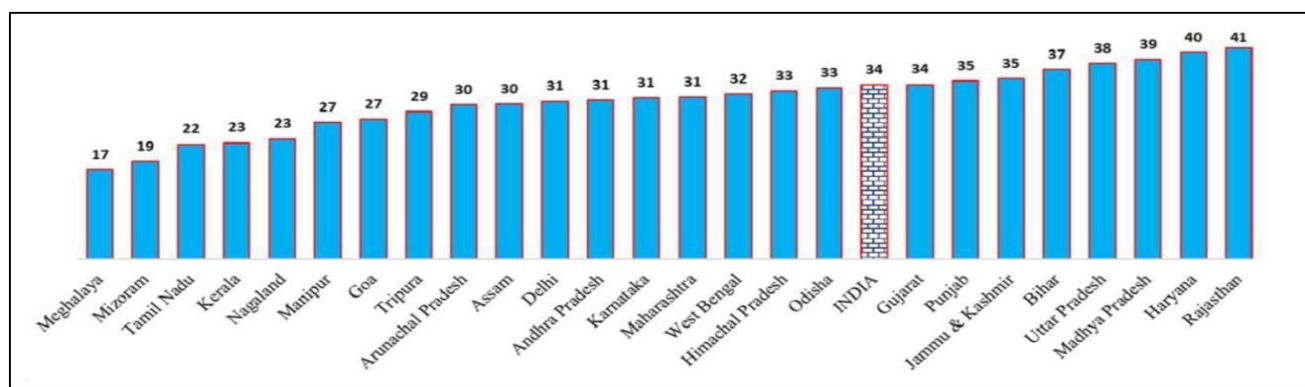
In addition to this index, the 2011 Census (latest) data on the following indicators has been employed.

- State-wise Literacy Rates (for both male and female)
- State-wise Workforce Participation (for male and female in both rural and urban areas)

It must be noted, here, that all data utilised for the study is secondary in nature.

Results and discussion:

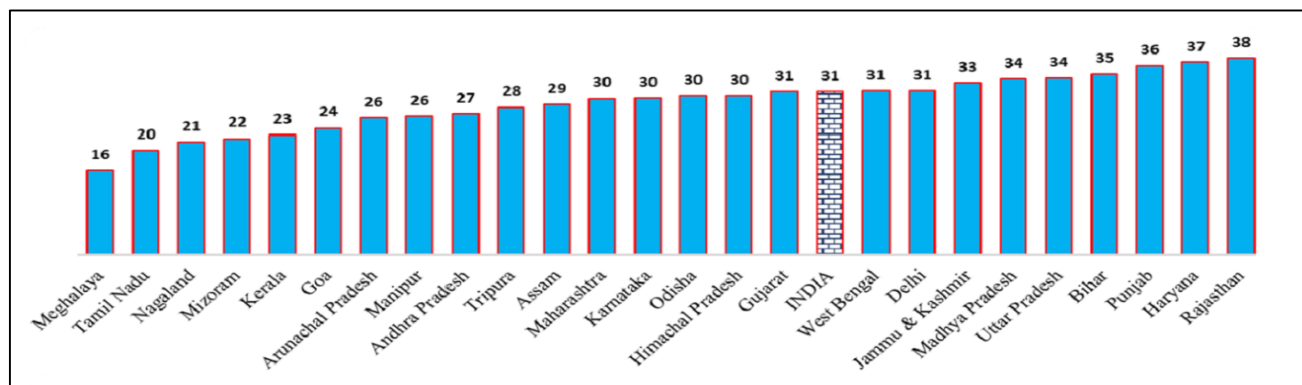
Fig. 1 Ranking of states on India Patriarchy Index for NFHS-1



Source: Singh et al., 2021

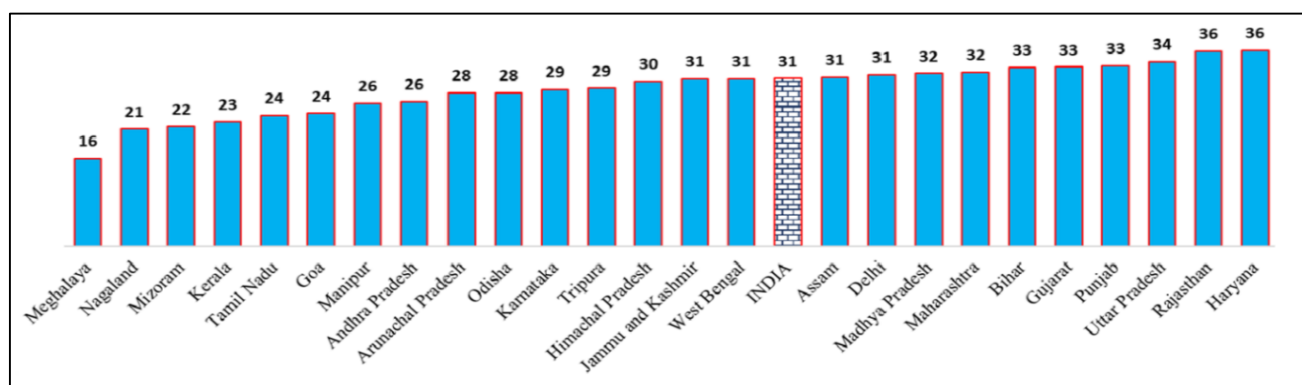
Fig. 2 Ranking of states¹ on India Patriarchy Index for NFHS-3

¹ Note: Bihar and Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh have been combined.



Source: Singhetal., 2021

Fig. 3 Ranking of states² on India Patriarchy Index for NFHS-4



Source: Singhetal., 2021

As is apparent from the three figures given above (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3), Meghalaya and Kerala have consistently ranked on lowest end of the India Patriarchy Index while Bihar, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have always been on the highest end. This corroborates what is already known about the former states being matrilineal in nature and the latter being patriarchal.

The tables given below provide some evidence of the impact of such positioning on the empowerment of women in these states.

Fig. 4 State-wise female literacy rates as per Census 2011

STATES	FEMALE LITERACY RATE	STATES	FEMALE LITERACY RATE
Kerala	92.1	Manipur	70.3
Mizoram	89.3	Uttarakhand	70
Lakshadweep	87.9	Gujarat	69.7
Goa	84.7	Karnataka	68.1

² Note: Bihar and Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh have been combined.



Tripura	82.7	Assam	66.3
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	82.4	Haryana	65.9
Chandigarh	81.2	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	64.3
Delhi	80.8	Odisha	64
Puducherry	80.7	Chhatisgarh	60.2
Daman & Diu	79.5	Madhya Pradesh	59.2
Nagaland	76.1	Andhra Pradesh	59.1
Himachal Pradesh	75.9	Arunachal Pradesh	57.7
Maharashtra	75.9	Uttar Pradesh	57.2
Sikkim	75.6	Jammu & Kashmir	56.4
Tamil Nadu	73.4	Jharkhand	55.4
Meghalaya	72.9	Rajasthan	52.1
Punjab	70.7	Bihar	51.5
West Bengal	70.5		

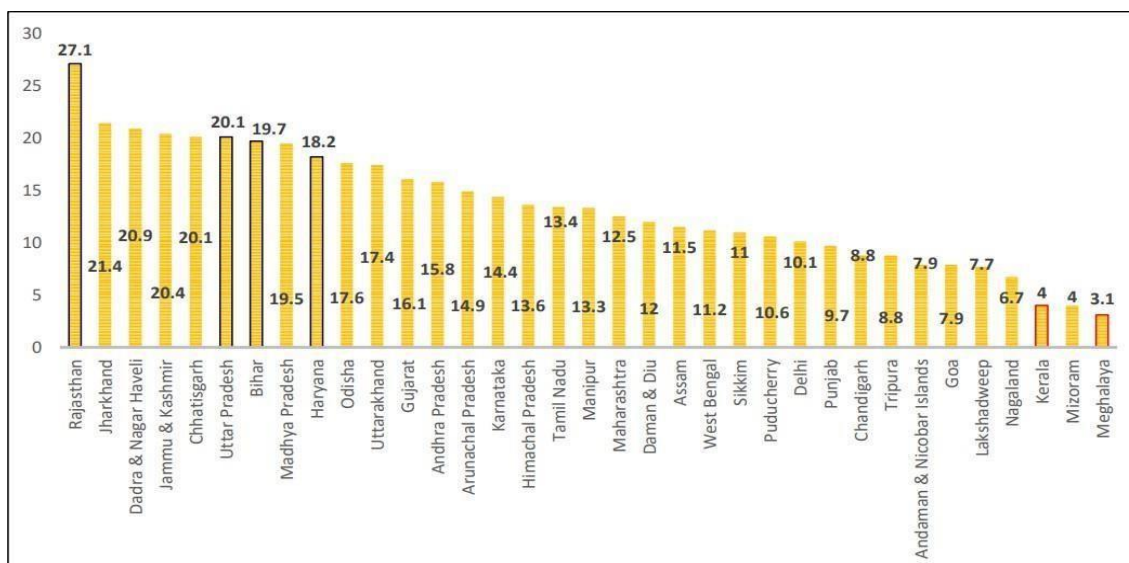
Primary Source: Office of Registrar General, India

Secondary Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

Fig. 4 denotes the female literacy rates of the states and union territories of India according to the 2011 Census. It has been arranged in descending order of literacy from highest to lowest. As can be seen, Kerala ranks on the highest end of the scale with Meghalaya somewhere in the middle and the patriarchal states towards the end. Weightage on education of women in these states seems to be very less.

Fig. 5 shows the differences between the male and female literacy rates. The scenario appears very severe in the predominantly patriarchal states while it is substantially low in the predominantly matriarchal states. Education, here, is equally emphasized upon for both male and female alike.

Fig. 5 Differences in male and female literacy rates (state-wise)



Source: Author's Estimation

Fig. 6 State-wise female workforce participation in rural areas as per Census 2011

STATES	RURAL PARTICIPATION	STATES	RURAL PARTICIPATION
Nagaland	52.3	Odisha	29.7
Himachal Pradesh	47.4	Tripura	26.3
Jharkhand	47.4	Assam	23.7
Chhatisgarh	46.3	Goa	22.6
Andhra Pradesh	44.6	Puducherry	21.1
Sikkim	44.6	Haryana	20.8
Rajasthan	42.7	Jammu & Kashmir	20.8
Maharashtra	42.5	Bihar	20.2
Mizoram	41.9	Kerala	20.2
Manipur	41.2	West Bengal	19.4
Tamil Nadu	41.2	Uttar Pradesh	18.3
Arunachal Pradesh	39.5	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	17.9
Madhya Pradesh	39.3	Daman & Diu	15.9
Karnataka	38.8	Punjab	14.3
Meghalaya	35	Chandigarh	14.2
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	33.4	Lakshadweep	12.6
Uttarakhand	32.9	Delhi	9.7



Gujarat	32		
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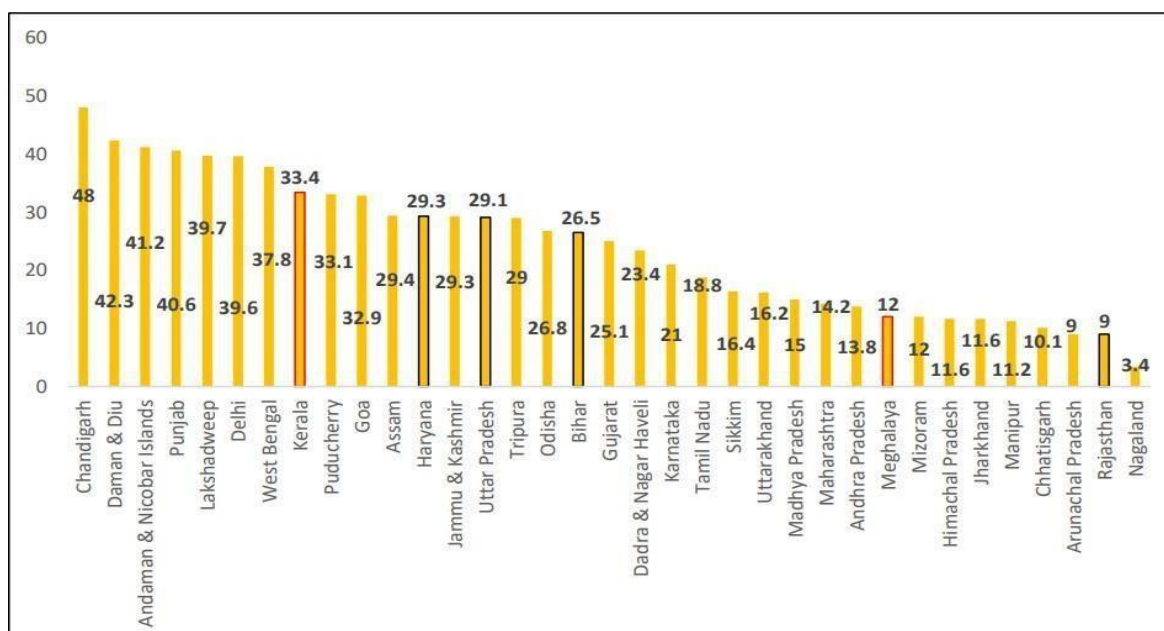
Primary Source: Office of Registrar General, India

Secondary Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

Fig. 6 highlights the state-wise participation of females in the workforce in rural areas. As is evident, females in the rural parts of Rajasthan are more engaged in the workforce, followed by Meghalaya and a wide gap later, Haryana, Bihar, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.

In Fig. 7, the difference in the rural workforce participation of men and women in each state is depicted. It is seen that this difference is majorly present in Kerala followed by Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and a significant jump later, Meghalaya and Rajasthan.

Fig. 7 Differences in male and female workforce participation in rural areas (state-wise)



Source: Author's Estimation

Fig. 8 State-wise female workforce participation in urban areas as per Census 2011

STATES	URBAN PARTICIPATION	STATES	URBAN PARTICIPATION
Manipur	33.2	West Bengal	15.4
Mizoram	31.1	Madhya Pradesh	15.1
Nagaland	25.9	Assam	14.9
Sikkim	24.8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	14.7
Meghalaya	23.6	Daman & Diu	14.5
Tamil Nadu	21.8	Jammu & Kashmir	14.5

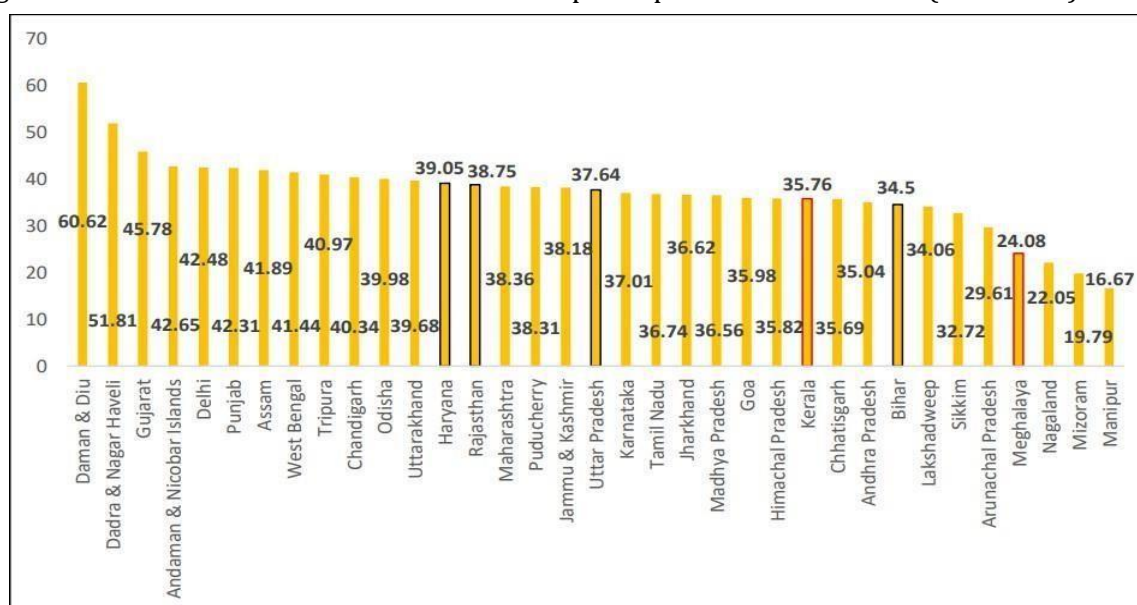


Goa	21.5	Odisha	14.1
Arunachal Pradesh	21.3	Punjab	13.2
Karnataka	20.8	Haryana	12.1
Himachal Pradesh	19.9	Rajasthan	12
Andhra Pradesh	19.1	Gujarat	11.4
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	17.7	Uttar Pradesh	11.3
Chhatisgarh	17.4	Uttarakhand	11.3
Maharashtra	16.8	Delhi	10.6
Puducherry	16.1	Lakshadweep	10.5
Chandigarh	16	Bihar	10.4
Kerala	16	Jharkhand	10.1
Tripura	16		

Primary Source: Office of Registrar General, India

Secondary Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

Fig. 9 Differences in male and female workforce participation in urban areas (state-wise)



Source: Author's Estimation

Fig. 8 focuses on the state-wise female workforce participation in the urban areas. Meghalaya is towards the higher end of the scale with the maximum participation. Kerala is somewhere in the middle following which Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are situated towards the tail-end.

Fig. 9, the difference in the urban workforce participation of men and women in each state is depicted. Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh appear to have the maximum difference. Kerala and Bihar are next with Meghalaya nearing the bottom of the scale.

**Conclusion:**

It is abundantly clear from the findings discussed above that education, both in general and specifically of women, is prioritised more in the predominantly matrilineal states than in the patriarchal ones. The figures reflect that the female literacy rates in the matrilineal states of Kerala and Meghalaya are as high as 92.1 and 72.9 respectively. On the contrary, the rates in the patrilineal states like Rajasthan and Bihar are as low as 52.1 and 51.5 respectively. Another noticeable disparity is that between the differences in the male and female literacy rates of these states. While the gap between the male and female literacy rates revolves around 18.2 to 27.1 in the patrilineal states, the same figures come down to 3 and 4.1 in the matrilineal states. These observations suggest the ranking of the selected states on opposite ends of the equality spectrum and substantiate the low importance given to female education in a largely patriarchal system.

When studying the female workforce participation, however, there arises a contradiction. The matrilineal states observe more women engaged in the workforce in the urban areas - female workforce participation rate of Kerala being around 23.1- while the patrilineal states lag behind with Bihar at just 10.4. Contrarily, in the rural areas, certain patrilineal states come to the forefront and matrilineal ones take a slight backseat. The participation rate in Rajasthan goes up from 12 in the urban areas to 42.7 in the rural areas, while that in Kerala comes down to 20.2, ranking lower than the patrilineal states of Rajasthan and Haryana. This could be due to any number of factors such as social conditioning, economic challenges, geographical factors and more. The reasons behind such contradictions are not delved into in this study, but open up scope for further research.

All in all, the point that is inarguably established is that the flawed structure of patriarchy should be broken down. It is essential to create a society free from the shackles of toxic masculinity or archaic traditional roles. Rather, an interdependency among men and women is required, both in society and their family lives, to ensure healthy and balanced growth of the individuals, society and economy. (Krishnan, English, Campus & Arjun, 2020).

Correlation between Disciplines:

From an educational perspective, this study is testament to the interplay between disciplines that students learn on a theoretical level, but rarely witness from a practical viewpoint. The analysis here points to an inter-relationship between the disciplines of Economics and Sociology. A causal interdependence between the two is revealed which makes it rather difficult to completely compartmentalize their study as individual disciplines. The discussion below highlights this conclusion.

One of the main points of commonality between the disciplines of Economics and Sociology is the study of people. Albeit their focus is on separate aspects of human lives, they are not completely impervious to one another. They cannot be compartmentalized as mutually exclusive for several areas of interdependence can be observed.

The disciplines approach similar issues from differing perspectives. For example, where an economist would connect income inequality with areas like redistribution, welfare, government policy or the role of market to determine the causes, a sociologist would dive into a study of class, gender, race, caste or education to study their impact on an individual's access to resources and opportunities.

Economic development enables social mobility by enhancing individual growth in many spheres. Globalization has further led to significant economic and cultural exchange. The consumption preferences of individuals are heavily shaped by the social settings. Social and cultural factors often, if not always, guide



economic choices. Behavioral Economics, actually, acknowledges the influence of socio-cultural norms on individuals' decisions and surrounds its study around them as well.

The significant interrelationship between the two disciplines has been highlighted to a certain extent through the examples cited above. This paper deals with a small part of that by attempting to draw a connection between the social construct of a place and the education, employment and, consequently, economic status of the resident women. This, in turn, leaves scope for in-depth study of the same in future, opening doors for a detailed exploration and solidification of the correlation between the disciplines.

Recommendations:

On the basis of the results of this study, the author has some suggestions with positive social implications. Gender-sensitive skill development programmes that are tailored to local economies and focus on digital literacy, vocational skills and entrepreneurship help in increasing female workforce participation. The PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana, 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme and Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana are working towards skill enhancement and increasing employability. Microfinance and loan schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana with strong focus on the women entrepreneurs in rural areas and Self- Help Groups aid in accessing easy credit and help women-owned enterprises flourish and create jobs in rural economies. Improved workplace safety and providing gender-specific benefits like maternity benefits, women's hostels and childcare facilities etc under all rural employment schemes have greater success in sustaining women's workforce engagement.

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The Impact of Gender on Educational Attainment and Classroom Involvement

Zainab Rahi, Dr. Ranjita Dawn

Abstract

The present study talks about the impact gender holds on the educational attainment and classroom involvement of students. It sheds light on the cultural, social, and institutional factors that shape the academic experience of students in India. Though there have been significant changes in the availability of education for all, there still persists major gaps, which needs to be filled at the classroom level itself. The present study focuses on patriarchal norms, gendered chores wearing the garb of domestic responsibility, and the biases society holds against women - even or rather especially in their formative years - and girls, and impacts their educational opportunities. Simultaneously, the same society uplifts and reinforces male privilege. The current paper refers to works by eminent feminists like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Bell Hooks, as well as Raewyn Connell. Apart from academic perspectives, the current paper also analyses media representation of this theme, which is appropriately reflected in *Balika Vadhu*, an Indian serial focusing on a female individual who loses her love, interest and right to study to marriage. The paper discusses the qualitative and quantitative result of a brief questionnaire administered to teachers as well as students, and explores the findings which reveal, how girls - to this day and age - face gender biasness, especially in the world of academics.

Keywords: matrilineal, patriarchal, literacy, workforce participation, women

Introduction:

Gender discrimination has been a centuries-old battle that is still being fought. Despite global strides toward gender equality, disparities in educational opportunities, engagement, and achievements persist. Historically, boys' education has been given major priority due to patriarchal structures; meanwhile, girls' education was either limited, neglected, or outright denied owing to societal expectations, economic constraints, and cultural biases. Boys were expected to study, chase success, be financially stable, and become the most prominent figure by providing for their families. On the other hand, girls were, and still are, expected to confine themselves to domestic responsibilities, leaving them with fewer opportunities to access formal education, autonomy, and financial independence. Although significant progress has been made, several issues regarding educational disparities, including, but not limited to, dropout rates for girls, classroom participation disparities, teacher expectations, self-perceptions among students, and subject-specific gender gaps, persist. To this day, several regions deny girls' education because of discrimination under the garb of distance and inaccessibility. If the girls somehow manage to claw their way into the classroom, they face inequality there as well. Through the lens of gender differences in education today, age-specific patterns of gender inequalities within the educational career need to be taken into account.



The present study aims to explore how gender influences educational attainment and classroom involvement by analyzing existing literature, media, and theoretical frameworks, with a focus on cultural and economic norms.

Need of the Study:

The role of gender in education is a topic that is not new but something that has been present for a long time and something that still persists today, and hence the problems faced by girls in education due to gender persist. There are cultural practices and social norms still in place that either restrict female education or make it extremely difficult to attain. Hence, it is important to keep looking into this matter and resolve the issues at its roots. This topic explores and addresses how gender affects educational attainment and classroom involvement. As a female student studying in an institution catering to women's education, I am passionate about female education, and I find it important to enlighten myself and others on this topic.

Review of Literature:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014) is a powerful critique portraying the way gender roles shape opportunities, expectations, as well as participation in various aspects of life, like education. It highlights how deeply ingrained gender norms are and how far internalized cultural expectations can shape the behavior and opportunities of people solely based on their gender. In her work, Adichie explores how girls are taught to be less than men from the very beginning. She stresses-through anecdotal records, how women and girls are not only denied their achievements and right to education, but also snatched away to soothe the bruised ego of the gender narrative. "*We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, 'You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you will threaten the man.'*" Adichie, in her work, highlights the importance of not only addressing but also challenging the systematic barriers that care more about prioritizing the male as supreme rather than the rights of the marginalized gender. She sheds light on how societal expectations often become a barrier to girls' academic performance. Society pressurizes girls and women into domestic roles and later uses the disparities in the educational outcomes of girls and boys as irrefutable proof that women belong in the kitchen. This leads to lower enrollment rates for girls in certain regions, early marriage, or their underrepresentation in higher education.

The barriers in educational attainment cannot be simply viewed through the lens of gender only. The degree to which gender impacts educational attainment in the classroom is also determined through the larger lens of race, class, and sexuality.

Bell Hooks, through her *theory of intersectional feminism* (1984), provides an additional perspective for examining and analyzing the impact gender has on educational attainment and classroom involvement. It postulates that gender cannot be explored in isolation but must be perceived in conjunction with various variables such as sexuality, race, and class. She states, "*The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy... It is the place where the conditions for the development of critical consciousness are created.*" Hooks calls for a pedagogical liberation that coincidentally aligns with the attempts to formulate an equitable educational space where gender and other intersecting identities do not hinder - or create hurdles - students' opportunities for participation, achievement, and success. Race, sexuality, and class are not the only lenses through which gender disparity should be viewed. The intertwining red threads of power, production, and emotion add to the various different angles this issue can be viewed in. The gender order is a patterned system



of ideological and material practices, performed by individuals in a society, through which power relations between women and men are made, and remade, as meaningful. The forms, codes, labels or categories of masculinity and femininity are created, reshaped, rebranded and renovated through the deep rooted gender order still persistent in our society.

Raewyn Connell's *Gender Order Theory* (1987) provides a powerful lens for understanding the impact of gender on educational attainment and classroom involvement. Connell has seamlessly woven the concept and theme of the gender order persistent even today into the threads of her social theory of gender, where gender hierarchies or orders forms a motif for the creation of human agency, which at an institutional and structural level also acts to constrain individual agency. It postulates that gender is not a fixed binary but rather a social structure put together through the combination of power, production, and emotion, which she respectively names *hegemonic masculinity*, *emphasized femininity*, and *subordinated masculinities and femininities*, and simultaneously analyzes how educational systems are complicit in perpetuating these gendered power dynamics. For instance, the dominant part of masculinity - hegemonic masculinity- provides privilege to traits like competitiveness and assertiveness, which often have some or the other influence on classroom dynamics, leading to marginalization of girls and non-conforming students who are taught, - from the beginning, - to be silent and invisible. This, in turn, takes the shape of emphasized femininity, which accentuates compliance, timidity, and nurturing, and ultimately limits their participation and representation in leadership roles. Connell states that "*schools are active agents in the construction of gender*," which means that educational institutions play a key role in reproducing or challenging societal gender hierarchies.

Media Analysis:

The Indian television series *Balika Vadhu* (2008–2016), which was formerly broadcast on "Colours TV," offered a powerful depiction of how local customs and gender norms affect girls' participation in and achievement in school. Child marriage, opposition to girls' education, cultural perceptions of girls as inferior to boys, and the transformational potential of educators and educational institutions are all topics covered in the series. Through the depiction of the life of the protagonist - Anandi - who was married off as a child despite her love for and intention to continue her education, *Balika Vadhu* holds up a mirror to society on their role in crushing the dreams and aspirations of young women and locking them behind bars of cookery and domestic chores. It also offers the harrowing tale of how traditional gender roles and expectations disproportionately affect girls' educational opportunities. The show portrays how Anandi's in-laws initially resist her desire to continue her education, underlining the societal belief that a girl's primary role is to be a wife and homemaker only. In one of the episodes, Anandi's mother-in-law goes as far as to say, "*Ladkiyon ka kaamg harsam bhalna hai, padhai-likhai se kya faida?*" ("Girls are meant to manage the household, what's the use of education?"). This dialogue encapsulates the gendered attitudes that devalue girls' education and prioritize domestic roles, directly linking to the paper's exploration of how gender norms impact educational attainment. The issue of child marriage, which disproportionately affects girls, as they are often married off to grown men, and boys are allowed to continue their education even if they are made to get involved in child marriages, is not a story of the past, but is something that continues to this day in the modern era. *Laapataa Ladies* (2023) deals with similar themes and resonated widely throughout the female audience.



Methodology:

This study incorporates a mixture of approaches, including qualitative and quantitative research. It explores primary and secondary sources to better understand and reflect on the impact of gender on educational attainment and classroom involvement.

1. Content assimilation

The content was procured after research was done, using secondary sources like various literature. Their review was done to understand the topic better.

2. Primary sources, such as media content, including but not limited to *Balika Vadhu* (2008-2016) were referenced, and its popularity was studied to analyze audience response and gauge the cultural opinion regarding female education.
3. Secondary sources, which formed a chunk of the literature review, were combed through to formulate the theory regarding the study. The secondary sources include, but are not limited to:

- A. *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- B. *The theory of Intersectional Feminism* (1984) by Bell Hooks
- C. *Gender Order Theory* (1987) by Raewyn Connell

4. Quantitative data collection included going through historical or government records and NGO reports, such as U-DISE (Unified District Information System for Education) and ASER (Annual Status of Education Report).
5. Separate Questionnaires/Google Forms prepared by the researcher for students and teachers regarding their experiences and opinions on gender differences regarding educational attainment and classroom involvement formed the qualitative data collection for this theory.
6. Proper consent is taken from participants, ensuring that their data remains private

Objective:

Addressing gender disparities in the classroom and how they affect educational attainment and classroom participation is a crucial step towards equal and quality education. Keeping this in context, the following objectives can be structured as research questions:

1. What is the effect of gender on enrollment, retention, and achievement in schools across different regions of India?
2. What is the role of society and culture in shaping gendered classroom involvement?
3. What is the role of the teacher in influencing students' academic experiences based on gender?
4. How does family play a role in a child's academic life?
5. What are the differences between male and female students?
6. What is the influence of gender on classroom involvement?



Results and Discussions:

The responses from the Google form questionnaire indicate that gender plays a big role in shaping educational opportunities and classroom experiences. Many responses pointed out that girls, especially in rural areas, often face hurdles like early marriage, household chores, and family expectations that favor boys' education over theirs. For example, one response mentioned how girls are expected to help at home, leaving little time for schoolwork. In classrooms, the dynamics are also heavily influenced by gender. Boys tend to dominate discussions and activities, while girls are often pushed to the sidelines, especially in subjects like math and science, which are seen as "boys' subjects." The data also shows that girls from marginalized communities – like those from lower-income families or minority groups – face even more challenges because of their intersecting identities. On a brighter note, some responses highlighted how education can be a game-changer for girls, helping them break free from traditional roles and become leaders in their communities.

The findings from the questionnaires circulated through the means of 'Google Forms' have important implications for everyone involved in education – policymakers, teachers, and society as a whole. First, there's a clear need for policies that tackle the barriers keeping girls out of school. Things like banning child marriage, providing scholarships, and ensuring safe transportation to school can make a huge difference. Schools and teachers also need to rethink how they run their classrooms. Teachers should be trained to create an environment where girls feel encouraged to speak up, take on leadership roles, and explore subjects like science and math without feeling out of place. For girls from marginalized communities, extra support like mentorship programs or community outreach can help level the playing field. Beyond schools, there's a need to change how society views girls' education. Campaigns that challenge stereotypes and community discussions involving local leaders can help shift mindsets. When families and communities start valuing education for girls as much as they do for boys, it can lead to lasting change. By addressing these issues from all angles, we can build an education system that truly works for everyone, regardless of gender.

Conclusion:

As teachers and human beings, it is our utmost responsibility to look out for our signs which make us bend to this patriarchal need of elevating men and caging women, be it under the illusion of protection or safety. It is the responsibility of the society, of which we are a part of, to stand up to this partiality that is sometimes so subtle that it misses recognition and identification. The classroom and society belong to the girls and women as much as it belongs to boys and men. Our future leaders, who are preparing to change the world should not be confined to worrying about changing the mindsets of the patriarchy-loving individuals who still form a core portion of our society.

Recommendations:

Educational institutions and teachers play a crucial role in addressing the impact of gender on educational attainment and classroom involvement. Schools can start by creating safe and inclusive environments where all students, regardless of gender, feel valued and supported. This means implementing strict anti-discrimination policies and ensuring that classrooms are free from bullying or harassment. Teachers, as the front-line influencers, can adopt teaching methods that encourage equal participation. For example, they can use group activities and discussions that give every student a chance to speak, ensuring that girls aren't overshadowed by boys. They can also actively challenge stereotypes by encouraging girls to take an interest in STEM subjects and boys to explore arts and caregiving roles, breaking down the idea that certain fields are "only for one gender."

Institutions can also provide training for teachers on gender sensitivity, helping them recognize and address their own biases. Schools should work to include diverse role models in their curricula, showcasing the



achievements of women and marginalized groups to inspire all students. Additionally, mentorship programs can be a powerful tool, pairing girls with female teachers or professionals who can guide and motivate them. Schools should also engage parents and communities, holding workshops or discussions to highlight the importance of education for girls and address cultural biases that may be holding them back. By taking these steps, institutions and teachers can help level the playing field, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their gender.

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