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Foreword

The Journal of Emerging Scholars is an undergraduate journal initiated by the Jyoti Dalal School of Liberal Arts. The 12 published scholars in the journal apply diverse disciplinary lenses, methodologies, social science theories and concepts to their individual research interests.

Being the journal of a liberal arts school, the Journal of Emerging Scholars is interdisciplinary in nature, showcasing the symbiotic relationship between diverse disciplines. It endeavours to promote undergraduate research, and serves as a platform to publish original and high quality perspectives surrounding literature, economics, marketing, psychology, and journalism.

By the way of introducing 'The Journal of Emerging Scholars,' we hope to bring forth the voices that resonated in the classrooms and research undertaken in Independent Research projects. Materializing the varied opinions and structuring them to their Independent Research Projects.

The main aim of bringing forth this publication was to encourage the practice of research, especially at undergraduate level where the students have taken the first step into the world of academia. With a zeal to bring the ideas that formulate their field of interest to print, the papers range from themes surrounding gender, literary publications, music, language, along with consumption behaviour and health insurance during the pandemic.

Bringing the first edition to actuality would not have been possible without the support of our students Pushkar Raghuvver, Khwahish Khan, and Saachi Gupta who offered editorial assistance to transform Independent Research Projects' reports into papers for this journal.

Our students Tanishi Srivastava, Janhavi Tiwari, Amatullah Arsiwalla have assisted in compiling all the research papers and designing this journal.

- Editors

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**TRANSPHOBIA UNDER THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK OF FEMINISM:
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF *HARRY POTTER*¹**

Abstract

Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling was caught amidst controversy when she published an essay on her website titled *J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues*. Many of the arguments made in this essay are severely damaging to the transgender community, and LGBTQ+ fans have expressed their disappointment over it. This paper aims to understand how *Harry Potter* fans, particularly transgender and non-binary fans, have responded to this essay, and how their perceptions of *Harry Potter* have changed post its publication. Further, this paper explores Roland Barthes' theory of 'The Death of the Author' in Rowling's context. It attempts to use this theory to understand the implications of separating the author from their work. Lastly, fanfiction becomes a central aspect of reader-response theories in contemporary times. It is a creative outlet for fans to realise their unfulfilled desires and 'fix' the source text to their liking. In doing so, they assert control over the text, and distance it from the original author. This paper discusses this process of distancing in relation to Rowling's controversy. Ultimately, it seeks to answer the question of whether a creator can ever truly be separated from their work.

Keywords: J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter, transphobia, reader-response, death of the author

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Introduction

For years, fans around the world have read the *Harry Potter* series as a story of acceptance, bravery, and revolution. From the prejudice faced by Hermione Granger for being ‘Muggle-born’ to the implications of Harry ‘living in a closet’, several instances from Rowling’s fantasy Wizarding World can be translated into social issues of the real world. In her book *Politics of Harry Potter*, Bethany Barratt (2012) writes, “Identification allows for singling out members of a target group. At its most basic level, this takes the form of individual abuse and verbal or physical violence, but committed by individuals, not the state. In this category, we can include most of what today would be termed hate crimes. Note that this is precisely what many of Malfoy’s actions would be in our world” (p. 120). The overarching message or spirit of Rowling’s bestselling series seems to be a fight against oppressive structures and the discrimination and hatred they enable.

In December 2019, Rowling spoke out in support of a woman who was fired for her transphobic tweets², and in June 2020, published *J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues*, an essay explaining her concerns about the ‘new trans activism’: “When you throw open the doors of bathrooms and changing rooms to any man who believes or feels he’s a woman – and, as I’ve said, gender confirmation certificates may now be granted without any need for surgery or hormones – then you open the door to any and all men who wish to come inside.” she writes (Rowling, 2020).

Accounts on Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms were quick to point out the obvious flaws in Rowling’s argument. As Georgia Goble writes in her article in *Varsity*, “But what she doesn’t seem to grasp, both in her tweets and subsequent essay, is that the cisgender³ female experience will never be erased. Transgender⁴ people make up less than one

² In a tweet, J.K. Rowling (@jk_rowling) said:

“Dress however you please.

Call yourself whatever you like.

Sleep with any consenting adult who’ll have you.

Live your best life in peace and security.

But force women out of their jobs for stating that sex is real?

#IStandWithMaya #ThisIsNotADrill”. See https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033?s=20.

³ The prefix cis- means “on this side of” or “not across.” A term used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not transgender.

⁴ Transgender: Used most often as an umbrella term, some commonly held definitions:

1. Someone whose gender identity or expression does not fit (dominant-group social constructs of) assigned birth sex and gender. 2. A gender outside of the man/woman binary. 3. Having no gender or multiple genders.

percent of the population. To welcome trans women into the discussion does not erase the experiences of cis gender women” (Goble, 2020).

Rowling’s essay is undoubtedly transphobic⁵ and dismissive of real, lived experiences. Coming from someone with a following as large as hers, these words are damaging in a society where transgender people are already one of the most vulnerable groups. Whether it is possible to ‘separate the art from the artist’ or not is one of the most important questions that we as consumers of media must tackle, and it takes center stage again in Rowling’s case. Here, it is perhaps not the place of the cisgender fan to make that decision. Rowling’s stance is not one of personal preference – it is one that holds political importance. It extends beyond her own self, to her young transgender and non-binary fans, and even lawmakers. As appropriately explained by Twitter user @AnaMardoll, “If you have Hufflepuff in your profile or a Buffy picture in your header, a lot of people don’t know where you stand on abuse. A lot of people want to still be viewed as basically a good and trustworthy person in spite of making a harmful thing part of their public identity.” (Mardoll, 2021). This misplaced protectiveness over Rowling’s work can prove harmful and make both online and offline spaces unsafe for transgender people.

‘Fanfiction’ or ‘fandom literature’ has, to a great extent, opened up the space for new questions within this debate. In his book titled *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, Henry Jenkins (1992) says that fans treat the original work like “silly putty”, using it as a base to create new stories with their own interpretations (p. 159). Fanfiction provides a platform to rewrite the original work and tell the story in a different way. Fan literature may go as far as changing the world in which the story takes place, and putting the characters in a completely different setting. It can be argued that the Reader-Response theory finds new meaning in fanfiction and fan-art culture. The reader becomes involved not just in the interpretation of the story, but rewrites it to fill in the gaps wherever they deem necessary. In doing so, the reader takes greater ownership of the story, its fictional world, and its characters. According to Bronwen Thomas (2011), fanfiction is not just about writing, it is about engaging in social networking and community building. We must recognize the active

⁵ Transphobia: The fear or hatred of transgender people or people who do not meet society’s gender role expectations.

Source: UCSF Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center University of California San Francisco <https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms> retrieved on 5 March 2021.

desires of fans instead of thinking of them as passive consumers (p. 7). Thus, I believe that with the changing perceptions of *Harry Potter*, it becomes important to understand the extent to which fanfiction can distance the reader's interpretation of a work from its original author, and whether it is possible to do so without being ignorant towards J.K. Rowling's explicit prejudice against the transgender community.

The objective of this paper is to understand how the reader's perception of the *Harry Potter* series changes in the face of J.K. Rowling's transphobic statements. It attempts to explore the relationship between the author, the work, and the reader through Barthes' theory of the 'Death of the Author' and the Reader Response theory. This will also give some insight into the question of whether or not J.K. Rowling's work can be viewed in isolation from her statements. Additionally, this paper analyses 'fanfiction' or 'fandom literature' as a way to rewrite the story and take ownership of the characters, while distancing the original author from it.

The methodology for this research will include looking at existing literature on J.K. Rowling's statement, the 'Reader Response' and 'Death of the Author' theories, and fanfiction, as well as analyzing online articles, Twitter threads, Instagram posts, and fandom literature from the community of readers and fans. I believe this will provide deeper insight into how the situation has been perceived in real and virtual worlds. I intend to include articles and perspectives of transgender and non-binary people on the issue in interviews, discussions, and talk shows. The ideal approach for this research would be a hermeneutical one, as it involves the exploration and interpretation of existing literature and material in order to understand the issue.

One major strategic issue faced while undertaking this research was that some helpful books and articles were either behind paywalls or not available. These will have to be accessed through the university library if available, and if not, alternative books and research papers will have to be used. Secondly, due to the limited time we have to work on this research project, the scope has had to be reduced. My topic of research is extremely vast, and there are still some areas left untouched. Moreover, it is not possible to encompass the perspectives of all transgender and nonbinary *Harry Potter* fans, and thus, reasonable conclusions will have to be drawn from the opinions of a few members of the community.

Fall from grace: Rowling is 'Cancelled'

On July 30th, the *Independent* reported that an 'I love J.K. Rowling' poster erected on Edinburgh station by a 'high profile opponent of transgender rights' had been taken down due to its 'political nature' (White, 2020). What would have once been seen as a simple act of appreciation for a beloved children's author was now a political statement, a clear message in support of one stance over the other. Across various social media platforms, a much bigger storm was brewing. The creator of 'The Boy Who Lived' (in a closet) was being 'canceled'. Merriam-Webster defines the practice of 'cancelling' as "to withdraw one's support for (someone, such as a celebrity, or something, such as a company) publicly and especially on social media"⁶. Once a respected and celebrated figure, J.K. Rowling's essay on transgender issues had resulted in this online 'cancelation', ostracisation, and a rapid fall from grace.

Aja Romano, who calls themselves an 'ex - Harry Potter nerd' on Twitter, writes in an article for *Vox* that they removed all eleven books of the *Harry Potter* series from their bookshelf. They write, "In boxing up those books, I metaphorically boxed up years of intense participation in the Harry Potter fandom, from writing fanfiction and going to conventions to moderating fan communities online and nurturing the friendships I made within them" (Romano, 2020). In the same article, they further explain that while being a Harry Potter fan is one of the most significant parts of their life, being non binary is an even more significant part of it.

Aja's words highlight a glaring problem that Rowling's essay presents for transgender and non binary fans. Continuing to make Harry Potter a part of their identity is no longer compatible with their identity as transgender and non binary people. Rowling has waged a war against the very existence of an already marginalised group of people. For a cisgender Harry Potter fan such as myself, the problem of being forced to choose between a cherished book and my commitment towards being an ally is almost insignificant in comparison, because it does not force me to choose between two very real parts of my own self.

⁶ Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cancel>

In an article published in *Them*, Kacen Callender expresses their concerns regarding transgender youth and mental health. “Her words have not only been emotionally harmful. They are dangerous and potentially life-threatening, and could impact a young transgender or nonbinary person’s mental health — the very same youth she is writing for, the same people she had once taught empathy, the lives she is supposed to want to protect and love” (Callender, 2020). As an influential woman, J.K. Rowling has a certain responsibility towards her fans. As an author whose readership comprises children and young people in such overwhelming numbers, this responsibility only increases. She seems to be blissfully oblivious of the harm her factually incorrect and insensitive statements can cause to young transgender fans who seek solace in her work.

Dana Aliya Levinson’s open letter to J.K. Rowling in Huffpost, sharing their thoughts as a transgender Harry Potter fan, described how they saw their own experiences embodied in Harry’s character:

I related to his isolation and his abuse. I related to his grief. I longed to be whisked away to Hogwarts to find family among friends. I became utterly lost in the world you created. The funny thing is, I remember the pang I felt when reading the chapter about the “Mirror of Erised” because I knew what it would show me if I were to look into it: myself as a girl looking back at me (Levinson, 2020).

Two of the most popular Harry Potter fan sites, *MuggleNet* and *The Leaky Cauldron* have published what appears to be a joint statement condemning Rowling’s transphobia. Both websites say, “We have seen countless people use the Potter books and fan fiction to explore their own identities while spreading love and acceptance. We know that this is still possible, and we know that we want to continue to be part of that movement. We are committed to doing better work in our community to uplift and center the people who have been marginalized and create positive change from within our fandom platforms.” Both sites continue to run, albeit with significant changes. *MuggleNet* no longer covers aspects of Rowling’s personal life, has removed purchasing links to her other work and the link to her website, and has attempted to keep her name out of their posts wherever possible. *The Leaky Cauldron* is following a more or less similar policy. Further, all tweets mentioning Rowling will be tagged ‘#JKR’, so that users can easily mute the hashtag and opt out of viewing them.

Rowling could not have chosen a more hurtful time to make her opinions known. Her article was published during the Pride month, and in the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement, which had been receiving international recognition like never before. It is clear by now that Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists, popularly known as TERFS, proponents of Rowling's brand of feminism lacks intersectionality. She speaks fiercely of empowering women, but pushes for the false narrative that transgender women are dangerous and threaten the rights of cisgender women.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigerian writer considered a feminist icon by many, called Rowling's essay a "perfectly reasonable piece" (Kelleher, 2020). She said, "Again JK Rowling is a woman who is progressive, who clearly stands for and believes in diversity." While amplifying the voice of the Nigerian woman, the same lack of intersectionality that is observed in Rowling's feminism haunts Adichie's as well. Both cases become increasingly concerning in light of the influence they hold. One big name in fiction literature, however, seems to openly disagree with Rowling. Horror and supernatural fiction writer Stephen King retweeted Rowling's tweet where she quoted Andrea Dworkin and said that women's words are treated like "acts of violence" by men. She later tweeted in appreciation of his support. However, when King was asked by a Twitter user to clarify his stance on transgender issues, and replied, "Yes. Trans women are women", Rowling was prompt to delete her earlier tweet praising him (Harrison, 2020).

This is another distinct way in which Rowling is powerful. Like Adichie, she belongs to the group of authors who are popularly associated with the feminist ideology. Her personal journey is a textbook 'rags to riches' story. Having sold a total of 400 million copies of the Harry Potter books in 55 languages, she holds the Guinness World Record for becoming the first billionaire author. She is one of only five self-made female billionaires. When authors like Adichie and herself offer their insight on a subject, that insight counts as more than just an opinion. A vast majority of readers who are unaware of the reality of transgender issues will understand her arguments as credible and rooted in fact, at least to some degree.

"Are you okay that every dollar of revenue that you generate for her, as a fan of her work, is a dollar that could potentially go to ensuring a trans person in her country suffers more?" asks Tumblr user platinumsupa. Their concerns are justified. Besides being a multimillionaire, Rowling is also politically well-connected. She is a close friend of Gordon

Brown, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and leader of the Labour Party from 2007-2010. In 2008, Rowling made a generous donation of one million pounds to the party. She made a second donation of the same amount in 2014 towards the Better Together campaign against Scottish independence run by former UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling, who also happens to be her friend and former neighbour (Carrell & Brooks, 2014).

When a woman of Rowling's standing expresses an opinion so openly, she is to be taken seriously for the simple reason that she has the social, financial, and political power to turn that opinion into direct legislation. It would not be difficult for her to influence law making that affects transgender and non binary people. Contributing to the revenue she makes from the *Harry Potter* books, films, and merchandise inevitably means funding her political beliefs. This is not just a theoretical possibility - Oklahoma Senator James Lankford recently quoted Rowling's essay while arguing to block senate consideration of an LGBTQ civil rights bill known as the 'Equality Act' (Fitzsimons, 2020).

This is not the first instance where J.K. Rowling and the *Harry Potter* franchise have come under fan scrutiny for being problematic. The film series has faced considerable backlash over lazily designed Indian 'Yule Ball' dresses for Parvati and Padma Patil, the only known Indian characters in the book. Rowling has been accused of anti-Semitic stereotyping in her portrayal of goblins as greedy, hook-nosed, evil bankers, and her decision to name the only Chinese character 'Cho Chang' has faced its fair share of criticism. While we might be inclined to pass off Rowling's *performative* representation and offensive stereotyping as errors in judgment from a less 'woke' time, they are far too damaging to be brushed under the carpet. The implications of these problematic choices could not have been obvious to young readers in the late 90s and early 2000s. That is why it becomes important to revisit, rethink, and reevaluate the literature and films we once took at face value.

In the Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*, a bullied child struggling with his identity comes out of the closet under the stairs and is welcomed into a society that embraces people like him. In the real world, it is bigots like Rowling who demonize Harry and force him back into the closet. Her views on transgender people contradict the fundamental message of acceptance in her books. "These books have helped so many come out and come to terms with their identities. How many young, queer kids fantasize about coming out of the closet and then learning magic? That's the best case scenario," actress and transgender rights activist Nicole

Maines writes in her piece for *Variety*. However, she still calls herself a *Harry Potter* fan. “These books and their messages still exist, and whatever views Rowling personally has can’t take that away from us. Nobody can take that away from us, and that world really belongs to the fans now” (Maines, 2020).

Death of the author, birth of the fandom

As we trace the history and origins of fanfiction, it becomes important to understand why the idea might appeal to the reader to begin with. According to Lesley Goodman, “Fan fiction, then, would seem to result from disappointment; the fans did not see what they wanted to see in the source text, so they enacted it in fiction, for other fans to read and experience.” It thus becomes an outlet for fans to resolve their dissatisfaction or frustration with the original or ‘canon’ work (Goodman, 2015). Henry Jenkins addresses this in *Textual Poachers*, his foundational work on fan theory and participatory culture, and says that it is a mixture of frustration and fascination that urges fans to construct alternate possibilities of their own (Jenkins, 1992). Goodman further suggests that there is an association between fan literature and Roland Barthes’ idea of the death of the author. In appropriating and changing the worlds, plots, characters, and settings, fans disregard the intentions and authority of the author (p. 7). In their book *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over The World*, Anne Jamison and Lev Grossman (2013) point out two important changes that the internet brought to fanfiction writing – speed and anonymity. Fan communities came together and were able to communicate faster than ever before, and fanfiction became free and more accessible (p. 127). For the first time, fans and writers were able to experiment with gender, sexuality, and appearances without the danger of being discovered. There was no longer a need to attend conventions or create a physical zine to become a part of a fan community.

Fanfiction, as Jamison puts it, is “Telling tales of heroes already known to be heroic” (Jamison & Grossman, 2013). An existing story is reworked and retold as the reader of that story would conceptualize it. The essence of the ‘fic’ is that it borrows from an original work, but in what manner and to what extent it does so is varied. Fanfiction has widely been used to fill in what fans believe are gaps within the original work, or entirely change something that is incompatible with the fans’ perception of how it should be. The disappointment and dissatisfaction of fans at a particular aspect of the original work paved the way for the ‘fix-it

fic’, what Lesley Goodman describes as an attempt to correct something that fans perceive is ‘wrong’ with the source text (Goodman, 2015). It becomes an outlet for fans to recreate the text in a way that they desired, but did not get. The question that then arises in Rowling’s case is this: How do we propose to ‘fix’ a wrong that does not lie in the original text at all, but in the author behind that text? That is a layered question, and to begin answering it, we must address how fans have already started to do so. Consider this excerpt from a *Harry Potter* fanfiction titled *the girl who lived again* by Archive of Our Own user dirgewithoutmusic:

“It’s just that I’m a girl,” Harry had said, and Arthur had nodded and asked her about how telephone booths worked. He would call her by the right pronouns until the day he died at the respectable old age of one hundred and thirty three, and he would make it seem easy. But Molly had to try. Hermione explained things faster and higher-pitched every time Molly messed up a pronoun. Molly frowned and muttered and put extra potatoes on Harry’s plate at breakfast. Harry slept in Ron’s room, which didn’t bother either of them but which made Hermione scowl. Harry got boxes of sweets and warm hugs, as Molly chewed things over. For her fifteenth Christmas, the Weasley sweater she would receive would be a bright, friendly, terrible pink.”

The title of one fanfiction reads *Harry Potter, except everyone is trans and JK Rowling can die by my blade*, and another is *The Trans-Boy who Lived (An Anti-TERF Rewrite of Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone)*. Other notable tags used on the website include ‘Everyone is gay’, ‘Trans Remus Lupin’, and ‘Black Hermione Granger’. These, among thousands of others, are examples of *Harry Potter* fans reclaiming the series through fanfiction. As is clear from the first title, they have no intention of continuing to promote J.K. Rowling and her beliefs through their work, and thereby no longer associate her with the *Harry Potter* series. Barthes’ idea of multiple voices manifests itself in fanfiction. There is no longer one, singular interpretation of the text, but rather several different ones that may or may not be compatible with each other. As Thomas writes, readers have diverse and sometimes conflicting relations with storyworlds (Thomas, 2011). They “inhabit them, transform them, make them their own.”

In the process of interpreting the original work in different ways, they also share these interpretations and become what Stanley Fish (2009) defines as an ‘interpretive community’ (p. 197). Not only do fans write fanfiction, but they also respond to and interact with other

similar fanfiction. In doing so, a large network of readers and writers is established. They become a community of fans, each of whom have their own way of perceiving the original text. They communicate with each other on the basis of fanfiction. Ideas like that of ‘fanon discontinuity’ - the understanding among large groups of fans to ignore certain events or arcs in the source text - are only possible in such a community environment. Coppa calls fanfiction a form of “creative conversation” (Jamison & Grossman, 2013). The fandom is therefore not a static entity.

Owing to its emphasis and dependence on the reader, fanfiction can be associated with the reader - response school of literary criticisms. Stein and Busse (2009) suggest that fan authors and artists pose a threat to the ideas of “original artistic creation and aesthetic ownership” (p. 193). One of the most famous reader - response theorists, Roland Barthes, discusses problems of ownership of an original work in his 1967 essay *The Death of the Author*. Barthes posits that within a capitalist society, the author becomes the heart of the literary work. He argues that the modern figure of the author is a product of our society discovering the “prestige of the individual” (Barthes, 1967, pp. 142 - 143). Literary works become centered on the author’s life and passions, and one seeks explanations for the work in the person who has produced it. To ascribe an author to a text is to limit it, in a way that when we understand the author, the text itself is ‘explained’ to us (p. 147). Furthermore, he comments on the multiplicity of voices within a particular text. He writes, “a text’s unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination” (p. 148). A text consists of multiple writings, and this multiplicity is focused on the reader, not the author. By analyzing a text through its author, one reduces it to only one narrative, and only one interpretation.

If we are to consider Barthes’ theory, then the discussion closes at that. J.K. Rowling, as an author and as a person, bears no influence on how *Harry Potter* as a novel should be read and understood. Her transphobic views, then, make no difference to our perception of her work. As discussed in the previous section, some fans have done just that. Moreover, as Goodman (2015) writes, fanfiction serves as a way for fans to disregard the authority of an author who, in their eyes, has failed. They show little concern for the author’s own intentions and wishes regarding the original work (p. 7). Despite the fact that fanfiction requires some basic pillars of the source text to stand upright, it distances the author as an individual from the text and treats the storyworld and its characters as concepts to be applied as and where one deems fit.

However, given Rowling's constant interaction with fans via social media and her website, it becomes difficult to consider this argument as conclusive. Social media has greatly changed the landscape of the fandom and influenced how fans, or even casual readers, interact with creators of the original work. On Rowling's notable Twitter presence, Laura Martens (2018) writes, "Rowling seems to be aware of the power she has as a celebrity on the platform and thus debates via retweets, letting millions of followers know how she feels. Even though it is not possible to know if and how many people she has convinced with her tweets, one should nonetheless acknowledge that Rowling's reach and possible political influence is large and that she may steer public opinion one way or the other." (p. 36). James F. English and John Frow argue that J.K. Rowling is among a group of authors who are not just acclaimed writers, they are 'celebrity novelists'. Her public personality and real life fascinates readers and is scrutinized by them, thus becoming an important aspect of how her work is received (English and Frow, 2008). This points to a significant change in the relationship between the author and the reader.

In 2012, Rowling started *Pottermore* (now called *Wizarding World*) as an official digital platform for news, articles, quizzes, and even a 'J.K. Rowling Archive' section that includes a collection of her unpublished writing. Rowling recognizes the value of keeping *Harry Potter's* legacy alive, and through that, her own legacy as its creator. *Pottermore* becomes a verified, constant point of contact for her fans to remain connected to her. In *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, Morimoto and Chin (2017) draw on Benedict Anderson's seminal theory and call modern day fandoms 'imagined communities', which, stimulated by technology, are able to connect people in different geographical locations and time zones (p. 231). The internet has entirely transformed fandom interactions in the last couple of decades. Fans now have easy and free access to information as well as photos, video clips, and other material. In his book titled *Understanding Fandom*, Mark Duffett refers to this as 'cultural capital'. He asserts that as a result of the internet, fandoms have become more public and 'globalised' in the last twenty years (Duffett, 2013). Online fan communities have a wider reach, but as a result, they are also that much more accessible to the author. This is especially true for the *Harry Potter* fandom, considering the time at which it emerged and rose to popularity. In her essay in *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, Heidi Tandy (2013) explains that it arrived at the cusp of radical change in methods of communication and interpersonal relations (p. 181).

In 2007, J.K. Rowling revealed that she had “always thought” of Albus Dumbledore as gay. This could have been the first step towards representation that the *Harry Potter* series desperately needs, except, she made this claim weeks after the last book was released. There is no mention of Dumbledore’s sexuality anywhere in the series. Rowling had made an attempt to directly influence our understanding of one of the most important characters in the series and change our existing ideas of him by using her authorial position. In 2016, she once again hinted at this with reference to the *Fantastic Beasts* film series, only for the director to later say that the films would not “explicitly” depict Dumbledore’s sexuality. Since the final *Harry Potter* book was released, there has been a rapid increase in portrayals of gay relationships in books, films, and TV – a domain in which *Harry Potter* severely falls short. Including gay characters is more a matter of keeping the franchise relevant than anything else. At a time when film adaptations follow almost every bestseller and social media has made it possible for authors to discuss their personal intentions about their books with a wider audience, it becomes difficult for the author to really and truly ‘die’.

Fan ‘works’ (such as writing and art) in specific, however, gained significant impetus from the increasing popularity of online platforms. By providing a wide reach and easy access, the internet helped legitimize the fandom as a community in the eyes of outsiders. Tandy claims that there was a time not too long ago in fandom history when corporations like Warner Bros. and Universal actively tried to suppress fan works because they did not adhere to copyright laws. When it first started out, fanfiction rubbed authors the wrong way. Fans were forced to delete entire categories of their work, and if Warner Bros. caught wind of copyrighted videos being uploaded on the internet, they would file a complaint and have them taken down (Jamison & Grossman, 2013, p. 179). The equation between fans and the authors backed by the multinational corporations producing their work has seen a considerable shift since the early days of the internet. US courts have since changed their definitions of “fair use” and transformative works. Additionally, corporations like Warner Bros. have directed their efforts towards increased fan interaction and involvement. *Harry Potter* fans were cast as extras, given advance copies of books, and have helped Rowling raise close to a million dollars for various causes by selling merchandise (Jamison & Grossman, 2013, p. 182). Social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr, and websites like Fanfiction.net and Archive of our Own have remodeled fan communities and done away with geographical challenges. To authors and corporations, the fandom is no longer a copyright threat, but a commercial opportunity. According to a 2011 article in *The Atlantic*, the *Harry Potter* franchise as a whole has generated

a whopping 21 billion dollars in sales, with the global box office comprising 21% of this figure. 33% of their revenue comes from merchandise only. Without the social network established by the fan community over the years, these numbers would not have been possible. J.K. Rowling and Warner Bros. have utilized this to their full advantage. This is indicative of the “dialogic” relationship between the source text and its transformative works that Thomas (2011) proposes (p. 10). It is believed that TV shows like *Smallville* and the *Doctor Who* spin-off, *Touchwood*, were inspired by storylines from fanfiction. As fanfiction and the fandom entered the mainstream spotlight, it became a profitable avenue for the original creators to maintain a steady flow of revenue coming in from their already released work.

While the Barthesian response to the central question of this paper would be the ‘death’ of Rowling and Warner Bros.’ authorial voices, the age of the internet does present serious challenges to the application of Barthes’ theory to modern day fandoms. One cannot declare the death of the author without acknowledging their increased involvement in the original work, an involvement that did not exist to its current extent during Barthes’ time.

In the previous section, we discussed Rowling’s financial and political power and influence in society. This becomes another complication in the way of separating the author from her work. To truly declare J.K. Rowling as a ‘dead’ author and to extend allyship to the transgender community she has harmed means to stop the revenue she still continues to receive from the success of the *Harry Potter* franchise. This implies that fans would have to stop purchasing the books, films, and merchandise entirely. All said and done, that is a difficult task. Fans who continue to explicitly endorse the *Harry Potter* series are sure to attract other readers to it, who may end up giving Rowling their money. That being said, this challenge is not one without solutions. Illegal, online copies of books can be found easily if one knows where to look. Small businesses have successfully manufactured and sold merchandise that is well within the copyright framework and does not fund J.K. Rowling or Warner Bros. However, distancing oneself from a harmful creator is a conscious effort - one that at least some portion of the *Harry Potter* community must and seem to have taken upon themselves with vigour

In 2013, Rainbow Rowell published *Fangirl*, a young adult novel that explores a teenage fanfiction writer’s life at university. After each chapter of the book, Rowell included an ‘excerpt’ from either the fictional ‘Simon Snow’ series (which bears striking similarities to

Harry Potter), or the protagonist Cath's fanfiction based on it. *Fangirl's* booming success encouraged her to write a standalone spin-off of the book by the same name as Cath's fanfiction - *Carry On*. Rowell has essentially created a separate fictional universe within her embedded narrative, and written a second story based on that fictional universe. The 'Simon Snow' series exists only in theory, but *Carry On* is very much a published novel. As of 2021, Archive of our Own has about 6,901 search results for fanfiction tagged 'Simon Snow'. Rowell herself has admitted to having written *Harry Potter* fanfiction, and she is among several other fanfiction authors who have later published their own, original works. Although *Carry On* definitively falls in the canon category, it is an example of the blurring lines and experimentation of the 21st century. To make fanfiction the premise of a novel, and for that 'fanfiction' to be turned into another full length novel is revolutionary, and a testament to the heavy footprint that fanfiction has left on readers.

Conclusion

In the final chapter of *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over The World*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* actress Amber Benson (2013) writes about the blurring lines between the 'us' - fans and fanfiction writers, and 'them' - artists and creators. Javier Grillo-Marxuach created a show called *The Middleman* for ABC family. Three years after it was pulled off the air, he wrote crossover fanfiction about his own show and *Doctor Who*. Due to the birth of transmedia, there no longer exists a clear divide between the artist and the fan. Benson argues that when a fan writes fanfiction, they do not remain just a 'fan' anymore, they become (unpaid) writers and artists themselves (Jamison & Grossman, 2013, p. 396). Another example is that of British author E.L. James, who initially wrote her novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, as *Twilight* fanfiction.

Fanfiction has become, perhaps, the greatest creative outlet of this generation. Many readers recall their adolescent years spent immersed in reading and writing fanfiction. It is more than just a way for readers to express themselves as writers - it is an opportunity to right canonical 'wrongs', tie loose ends, and experiment with the gender, sexuality, and even the race of characters when fans find their own identities underrepresented in the original text. *Harry Potter* fans have already begun their process of distancing the series from Rowling with their fanfiction. Fanfiction has served as a powerful tool to cope with the disappointment of being let down by a childhood hero. And full-fledged fanfiction constitutes just one part of the larger fandom - fan art, Tumblr text posts, Twitter threads, Instagram captions, and Pinterest boards, have all contributed to participatory culture as we know and experience it today.

The aim of this project was to explore the application of the Death of the Author theory in the context of *Harry Potter* and J.K. Rowling's transphobia. The advent of the internet has certainly problematised this. But, it cannot be denied that the level of interaction and community discourse that social media and fanfiction websites provide has enhanced the fan experience radically.

In order to effectively apply any literary theory to a current issue, it is imperative that we locate it within the historical and modern context of the problem. Although perceived as a modern day phenomenon, the fandom has a long history. Roland Barthes' theory was groundbreaking in shifting the focus of the text from the author to the reader. But in a decade that has seen geographical and ideological boundaries being blurred, the distance between the creator and the consumer is no longer what it once was. We are witnessing an era where the gap between the author and the reader has been bridged in a way that Barthes could not have anticipated. As an author, Rowling is known to use this closeness to her benefit.

The implication of this for the fandom is twofold. Firstly, fans now have platforms on which they can converge in large numbers as one community, irrespective of geographical distance. Secondly, the fandom as an entity has gained legitimacy. Active fan participation is seen as a normal and even necessary aspect of a book series or film franchise. The fandom is a major source of revenue, and thus receives encouragement from authors. The author - reader relationship of the 21st century is therefore a symbiotic one. It is a give and take. In light of this changed dynamic, the author cannot simply be 'killed'.

There is no debating the fact that J.K. Rowling's statements have caused irreparable damage to the transgender community. What is even more alarming is that her transphobic views are not limited to comments and tweets. She has published a 3600 word long essay on the subject and is actively involved in the larger movement that seeks to invalidate transgender people's identities. As someone who is widely hailed a feminist icon, she has given legitimacy to transphobic views and a platform for them to be expressed. Cisgender fans and theorists cannot begin to understand the extent of the harm that Rowling has done and is capable of doing with her words, and her financial and political power. In its modern sense, the 'death' of J.K. Rowling must then mean that she can no longer profit from her book series and its film franchise. Until then, *Harry Potter* is just as much a threat to the transgender community as

Rowling herself. Rowling's words have already begun to fuel transphobic sentiments within political and cultural spheres. Defending *Harry Potter* is a slippery slope, a road that must be walked with caution, because as fans who are writing, interacting, and posting in the age of the internet, we carry a responsibility that goes beyond our own selves. The *Harry Potter* fan community must continue to condemn Rowling and distance themselves from her.

For the sake of pure research, there are endless theoretical solutions to ponder, write, and publish. But at the end of the day, one must not forget that this is a question of an entire community's identity and lived experiences, experiences that cannot be diminished or erased by means of theoretical justification. J.K. Rowling does not exist in isolation, or as an exception among her contemporaries. In just the past few years, we have witnessed the ugly truth about several creators such as Joss Whedon come to light. Much like in Rowling's case, revelations of Whedon's abusive on set behavior shook the very foundations of what *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* stood for – a progressive, generation-defining franchise with a strong female lead. One shudders to think of how many more transphobes, abusers, and harassers have flown under our radar. No matter how difficult, fighting bigotry within the art we know and love is a responsibility every fandom must undertake.

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GLASS CEILING OF GENDER STEREOTYPES: POTENTIALS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA¹

ABSTRACT: There is a speedbump of gender stereotypes that slow down the progress of economic development through women entrepreneurship. This research study is an endeavor to explore how women entrepreneurship correlates to positive economic development. The primary focus and base of analysis is assumed to be the tertiary sector in India. A secondary analysis of qualitative (theory of gender stereotypes) and quantitative (verified data relating to women entrepreneurship and economic boons and banes in the tertiary sector in India) is conducted. For the sake of coherence, the metric of Gross Domestic Product or GDP has been applied. The dialogue of the paper includes – entrepreneurship as the motivator for economic development; and gender stereotypes devising a gap in the full potential of the economy. While the gender-inclusive examination aimed to corroborate numbers and words into a factual presentation of content, the lack of quantifiable data resulted in a zero correlation between women entrepreneurship and economic development. Yet recurring trends in the rise of social media, recession, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic display how women entrepreneurs are untapped resources that when used, can bring abundant success. Lastly, qualitative findings with respect to the use of language and format of writing represent a certain mundanity with respect to women entrepreneurs. In this era of women empowerment, it is important to not lose sight of the real and immemorial issues at hand; thereby encouraging extensive research on the topic of women entrepreneurship in new, improved and innovative methods.

Keywords: *gender stereotypes, women entrepreneurship, economic development, tertiary sector*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The commonly used metaphor of a "glass ceiling" that women have to "breakthrough" has been often engaged within conversations about feminism and women empowerment. The most standard and striking property of a glass is its see-through ability; hence, if society can blatantly view the potential of women being curbed and toxic inequalities habituating, then why has the ceiling not been broken yet? This research study begs that the "glass" in this scenario are 'gender stereotypes that are constructed by relations in society. For the sake of an efficient analysis, the project focuses on economic interactions, further narrowed to entrepreneurship. To build a detonator strong enough to shatter the "glass ceiling" or 'gender stereotypes', there must be a positive and forward shift in the standard of living, education, mentality and other welfare-related aspects. This allows 'economic development' to segue into the discussion as without a trailblazing economy, the nation will remain stagnant. Entrepreneurship is the key to unlocking economic prospects in the modern society. The research hypothesizes that the women demographic undertaking a role in the labor force through the confidence and independence of being an entrepreneur will advance the economy.

Cantillon elucidated the concept of entrepreneurship as exchanges in return for profit and having to apply business judgement in times of uncertainty (Ahl, 2004, p.37). Exploring multiple definitions through economic pioneers, it can be observed that men have dominated the discussion, leading to the entrepreneur typically perceived to be having male characteristics. Women entrepreneurship has been most famously termed as 'invisible' (Sundin, 1988; Sundin & Holmquist, 1989; Grauers, 1999; Ahl, 2004). Furthermore, there is a lack of gender-inclusive measurement framework and male-gendered theory (Reed, 1996; Mirchandani, 1999; Ahl, 2004) takes a front seat in the narrative. Gupta et al. (2009) studied the influence of gender stereotypes in women entrepreneurs and found that both men and women, view the field of entrepreneurship as masculine. Stereotypes can be broadly termed as the distinct behavioral expectations of men and women by society and themselves (Ellemers, 2018).

Shifting the angle, Wennekers & Thurnik (1999) investigated the linkages of entrepreneurship and economic growth to find that the modern economy potentially encourages entrepreneurship. The authors illustrate that "*culture institutions*" play a role in the incentivization of entrepreneurship. Using a feminist perspective, deep-rooted patriarchy in the

concept of entrepreneurship is viewed as a complication to economic growth and development. Even in the realm of research, the peer-reviewed and academically trusted journal of Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice admitted to involving the discourse of women entrepreneurship only in the last 12 years (Hughes et al. 2012). Although there has been an increasing interest in the topic, Hughes et al. (2012) has defined this stage of development in women entrepreneurship as *adolescence*.

The World Bank has stated that women entrepreneurs notably aid the advancement of economic growth and reduce poverty. Citing the example of Whitney Wolfe Herd, the founder of Bumble has created over 700 jobs worldwide through the agency of an app that aims to empower women in the online dating world. As an exception to survive the thresholds of gender discrimination, Herd capitalized on the mere opportunity of being able to establish her start-up. Additionally, World Bank data imputes that 1 in 3 businesses are owned by women (Halim, 2020). Therefore, a dialogue can be constructed – entrepreneurship as the motivator of economic development and growth; gender stereotypes and factors have devised a gap in the full potential of the economy; the emergence of literature centering women entrepreneurship; lastly, transforming the male nucleus of entrepreneurship towards a feminist or gender-equal approach.

To effectively study the compelling phenomena of women entrepreneurship and gender stereotypes, the researcher proposes to use a mixed-methods approach. Brush et al. (2009) have dawned on the importance of a *gender-aware framework* for examining women entrepreneurship. This study suggests an integration of secondary data analysis of women entrepreneurship indicators with a systematic review of the theories of gender stereotypes and gender attitudes. A collaboration of these methods will generate a holistic, concise and comprehensive view of whether there could be economy-level change focusing on the private or corporate sector. Core themes in the women entrepreneurship sector will be highlighted through literature and graphical data representation. The research design will be *correlation* to concentrate on the relationship of women entrepreneurship, gender stereotypes and attitudes, and the economy.

2. SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

With reference to India, the 2018 Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs positioned the country at 52 among a total of 57. The Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute in 2015 stated that India resides under the 20th percentile in the female

entrepreneurship index; this is distantly away from developing nations such as Brazil and Nigeria. In 2020, India secured the 70th rank out of 77 countries for the Female Entrepreneurship Index (International Finance Corporation, 2020). Within the landscape of entrepreneurship, India has grown 13.5 to 15.7 million (20%) women-owned enterprises (Bain & Company, 2019). According to the Statista Research Department (2021), women own 20.37% of the operating micro, small and medium businesses in India. Micro enterprises are the most populated by women with 20.44%, followed by 5.26% of small enterprises and lastly, a mere 2.67% of medium sized businesses. The Confederation of Indian Industry has reported that an estimated existence of 6.3 crores micro, small and medium enterprises in India. The governmental agency further stated women preside over approximately 80 lakhs of these. MSMEs are integral to the economy's growth by more than 30% of the GDP and by being the second largest employers after agriculture in the nation.

This leads the point of women-owned enterprises generating 150-170 million jobs which correspond to more than 25% of indispensable employment for the working-age population until 2030 (Bain & Company, 2019). If not acted upon, by 2030, India's working age population will exceed 1 billion, leaving 400 million women's economic capability and power unused (Bain & Company, 2019). Ensuring equality of women in the workforce could elevate India's GDP by \$0.7 trillion in 2025 or 16% more than the unequal framework (McKinsey & Company, 2015). The "Power of Parity" report by McKinsey & Company in 2015 projects a prosperous sum of \$2.9 trillion added to the Indian economy. Forfeited advantage can be displayed via the figures of 66% of unpaid women workers in proportion to 12% of men (Bain & Company, 2020). Despite this blatant benefit, it is startling to learn that in India, only 33% of the early-state entrepreneurs are women (International Finance Corporation, 2019). A report by the Initiative for What Works to Advance Girls in the Economy in 2020 showed that the female total early-stage entrepreneurial activity in relation to that of males, fell from 79.6% to 62.1% between 2018 and 2019.

The report by Bain & Company (2019) displayed that around 59% of women who are self-employed believe it reduces dependence on their spouses and 46% consider it a way to break through the glass ceiling. Women entrepreneurship's modern perspective in terms of health, education, and innovation could transcend India's economy and society. Yet, women actively engaging in the workforce have 2.9 times more chances than men to be unemployed (Bain & Company, 2019). The same report presents an overall unemployment rate of 7% in India, in stark contrast to the unemployment rate of women being 18%. Bain's account of data

suggests that 10-30% of enterprises termed as "women-owned" may not be run by women and the actual figure might be below 20%.

The Covid-19 pandemic arrived as a tumultuous storm, shaking the already unsteady foundation of women entrepreneurship in India – 73% of women entrepreneurs were negatively impacted, and 20% of them faced nearly redundant revenues (Bain & Company, 2020). 43% of women that recorded a decrease in productivity owing to "work from home" attributed it to domestic duties and distractions (Bain & Company, 2020). This propels the idea of gender stereotypes merging into women entrepreneurship.

3. THEORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPT

Gender Stereotypes – The United Nations: Human Rights (2014) defined ‘Gender Stereotypes’ as the generalized view or preconception about attributes, characteristics or roles that are or ought to be possessed or performed by women and men. Visually descriptive features such as gender, enable people to quickly sort others into categories (Powell & Graves, 2003). With respect to this research study, gender stereotypes ascribed to women in entrepreneurship are considered. Their barriers in the field of entrepreneurship based on merely ‘being women’ are brought into light using the torch of ‘Gender Stereotypes’.

Women Entrepreneurship – The Government of India elucidated ‘Women Entrepreneurship’ to be a woman enterprise owned and controlled by a woman, holding minimum 51% capital and hiring at least 51% of women employees. The research study will identify women entrepreneurship as the field wherein women begin their own businesses – from ideation to execution. The researcher will refrain from taking other factors such as the gender of employees and financial interest into account but rather emphasize on entrepreneurial characteristics of the woman (this directly relates to gender stereotypes).

Economic Development – Esteemed and retired professor of Economics at MIT, Karl Seidman’s Consultancy Service (2019) outlines economic development as the sustainable competitive advantage in the long haul. This is rooted in bolstering chief economic assets, linking assets to sectors with wealth creation, export potential and promoting equal development to correct income and wealth inequality. Through this research paper, economic development will be defined using Seidman’s core ideas with special attention targeted towards improving the overall well-being and quality of life of the citizens. The

measure or indicator for economic development is under the caveat of the **tertiary sector** in India.

4. NEED FOR STUDY

The Covid-19 pandemic has brutally wounded India's economic structure and the hope rests on women entrepreneurship as the only antidote to its fatality. Maritz et al. (2020) defines entrepreneurship as an "unsung hero" during the circumstances of the pandemic. At this time of economic uncertainty, the research project aims to highlight the most obvious and ignored solution for an economic revival – women. As women attempt to widen the entry into the economy, it is essential to create a background of understanding that concretely claims their position.

As women are inherently dismissed because of their gender, the research is required to contradict this rejection using the conception and manifestation of inequality – gender stereotypes. Moreover, the study analyzes the holistic picture of economic and social welfare through economic development; offering a glimpse into a modern and trailblazing society that is not torn down by intricately woven social constructions. The study's interdisciplinary (sociological and economic) approach that harmonizes concepts that are qualitative and quantitative in nature in an appropriate proportion bids a valuable compilation of knowledge and information.

From the point of view of a bottleneck analysis, studying women's entrepreneurship and economic development is extensive. The research project narrows the topic to the specific concept of gender stereotypes to arrive at a concise and comprehensive conclusion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. LITERATURE SURVEY

Women Entrepreneurship (majorly in India)

Women entrepreneurship can be broadly defined as the act of business ownership and business creation that empowers women economically increases their economic strength as well as position in society (Deshpande & Sethi, 2009). Brush et al. (2015) comment on the global scenario of women entrepreneurship as one of the quickest growing entrepreneurial placements. With the backing of emerging literature, it can be seen that women assume a large

role in the entrepreneurship phenomenon and economic development (Sarfaraz et al., 2014). Sharma (2013) culminates that entrepreneurship among women improves the wealth of the nation in general and family in particular. A stylized fact of entrepreneurship is its assistance in advancing the economic trajectory of India; connecting this to women being half of the population, there is severe scope of expansion and opportunities for the economy through women entrepreneurship.

Ahl and Marlow (2012) express the twin nature of gender biases and entrepreneurship. The authors describe the domain of entrepreneurship as an illusion of an open and meritocratic socio-economic space; there is a severe insistence on considering gender assumptions while referring to the field at hand. A common pattern that has become apparent from the very beginning is that “women” entrepreneurship does not exist without the discourse of gender. A study conducted by Cohoon, Wadha & Mitchell (2010) challenge the embedded ideology of gender in women entrepreneurship by finding that the main motivational reasons for women becoming entrepreneurs had nothing to do with their “women-ness”. Still, the integrated nature of gender being entirely ignored would result in an unfair analysis. A plethora of researchers such as Ahl and Nelson (2010), Baron and Henry (2011) and Sullivan and Meek (2012) have reviewed extensive literature and proposed gender-inclusive frameworks/models to study women entrepreneurship. Gender as a center of analysis is crucial to this research paper. There is heavy focus on various structures of studying gender to bridge the gap between methodology and put forward a concrete argument of why women entrepreneurship must be studied, reviewed and therefore, encouraged in society.

Referring to India, women entrepreneurship has significantly grown in the last decade and an EdelGive Foundation Report (2021) projects 90% growth in the sector within 5 years. Daymard (2015) demonstrated the increase of female entrepreneurs to approximately 10 million from 2005-2015. Several studies (Deshpande & Sethi, 2009; Sharma, 2013; Daymard, 2015; Baporikar & Akino, 2020) focus on the literacy rate disparity as a crucial reason for economic drawbacks in entrepreneurship. The literacy rate of Indian women is 64% compared to 82% of men (International Monetary Fund, 2019). The Sixth Economic Census provides evidence for regions with higher women literacy having more entrepreneurs or women-led small scale industry units, namely the four southernmost states and Maharashtra. Another trend that can be observed is the limitation of women entrepreneurs to the MSME sector in India (Danabakyam & Kurian, 2012; Deshpande & Sharma, 2013; Dangi & Ritika, 2014; Goswami & Thakur, 2015). The MSME sector in India factors in 8% of the country’s GDP (Goswami &

Thakur, 2015). It is interesting to note that within MSMEs, the bulk of women entrepreneurs are collated in micro enterprises (Statista, 2021).

As mentioned before the MSMEs are the second-largest sector providing jobs after agriculture (Statista, 2021). This sets the base for understanding how the contribution of women deeply impacts the economy's results. Arora (2012) examines the relationship between state openness and gender inequality. The researcher finds that low per capita income prevailed in states with high gender inequality and high per capita coexisted with low gender inequality (Arora, 2012). This indicates the positive impact of increasing threads of women being woven into the economic fabric of society. Still, the issue of women entrepreneurship and its effect on economic development remains complex. Bandiera & Natraj (2013) conducted cross-country research of policies that are meant to reduce inequality and hence, determine whether these can inform the logic of policies hereon. The researchers express that gender inequality is correlated with omitted factors, that affect economic growth (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013). To conclude this section, the limitation of Bandiera & Natraj (2013) must be kept in mind as it will be applicable to the study in question.

Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

Sanghi and Srija (2016) make the powerful statement, “Entrepreneurship is not new to India.” The researchers argue that from the pre-independence, Swadeshi movement in 1905 to the Make in India campaign launched in 2014, entrepreneurship has been a core theme of nation-building and a self-sufficient economy. An entrepreneur not only plays a pivotal role in the economic development of a country but also poses as a catalyst for social change by working for the greater good (Dhaliwal, 2016). As this research study adopts a broad and positive definition of economic development that extends into social welfare, these entrepreneurial characteristics laid down by Dhaliwal (2016) are of utmost importance. First world countries such as the U.S.A, Russia or Japan, have achieved their apex position using the instrument of entrepreneurship (Dhaliwal, 2016).

The relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development has been famously illustrated as a U-shaped curve (Carree et al., 2010). The researchers state that economic development can be approached using various different ways. There is a paradox between Carree et al. (2002) and Carree et al. (2007) when the former suggests a U-shaped model of investigation for the “business ownership rate” and GDP, and latter recommends an L-shaped review of analysis.

Martinez-Fierro et al. (2016) further contribute to the analysis of entrepreneurial characteristics and a nation's economic development stage. The researchers build on Porter et al. (2002) using the classification of an economy into a *factor-driven stage*, *efficiency-driven stage* and *innovation-driven stage*. The authors follow a similar methodology as proposed in this research – they analyze data using a GEM model and environmental model defined by ‘experts’ to obtain findings and results. In this case, the secondary analysis will be rooted in combining the statistical data with a theoretical understanding of societal operations.

After denoting a concrete link between entrepreneurship and economic development, the study of Bakshi (2013) proves this relationship in the Indian context. The measure applied was data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) concentrated on Total Entrepreneurship Activity (TEA). This prompts the notion of using indicators that are established by globally recognized organizations such as the World Bank. While the study at hand will not solely rely on GEM data, it will secure heavy material from the above-mentioned panel. Sanghi and Srija (2016) continue this discussion by encouraging self-employment and job creation in the economy through entrepreneurship. The researchers adopt a smart strategy of using verified data to convince readers of the obvious benefits of start-ups in the economy.

Bringing these points in perspective, it propels the narrative of entrepreneurship being a fundamental warrior in the battle of economic improvement in India. The parallel discussion of women entrepreneurship seeks to increase the rate of economic progress and display substantial development in the form of growth of the tertiary sector.

Gender Stereotypes

Stereotypes are generalizations about groups or communities that are applicable to the group members solely because they fall into the group; gender stereotypes are generalizations about the attributes and characteristics of men and women (Heilman, 2012). Heilman (2012) explains the descriptive and prescriptive properties of gender stereotypes. Descriptive stereotypes define what men and women are like, while prescriptive stereotypes dwell on what they should be like (Heilman, 2012). Gupta et al. (2009) elaborates by stating that women are perceived to be enriched by “communal” or nurturing qualities such as kindness, connectedness, timidity that inhabit their role as mothers. On the other hand, men are recognized to have more “agentic” or powerful characteristics, namely independence, courage and autonomy (Gupta et al., 2009). This sums up their patriarchal position of being at the apex of society.

Gender Stereotypes in Women Entrepreneurship

Gender stereotypes being intertwined with cultural beliefs (Adom & Anambane, 2018) can be linked to Medhora (1965) who claims that entrepreneurship in India stems from religion and the caste system. Entrepreneurs are still mistaken as Hindu traders that force the image of male entrepreneurs. This sparks the reason to study gender stereotypes in entrepreneurship and compulsively attempt to fracture these notions. The role of gender stereotypes are commonly studied along with innovativeness in entrepreneurship (Fuentes et al., 2017). The other pattern discovered was of entrepreneurial intentions (Gupta et al., 2005; Gupta et al., 2008; Gupta et al., 2009) and an exogenous evaluation by society of entrepreneurs based on their gender (Gupta et al., 2012; Malmström et al., 2017).

Referring back to the metaphor of the "glass ceiling", Vossenbergh (2013) offers an explanation for its immortality. Although global data may seem manageable, country level statistics of women entrepreneurship compared to male entrepreneurship reveals a disparity of 1.5% to 45.5%, with women falling in the category of the lesser gender (Vossenbergh, 2013). Gupta et al. (2009) attempts to understand this lag of women entrepreneurs compared to men and finds that due to the perceived masculine nature of the field, women are less likely to assume the career of entrepreneurship. Another notable finding was that individuals who identify more with the male gender have a higher inclination to become entrepreneurs. This attests to the idea that gender stereotypes form the entry-barrier of women in entrepreneurship.

2. RESEARCH GAPS

Women entrepreneurship has been broadly studied under various connotations such as its progress, their motivations, and innovativeness, and so on. The research papers cited above, particularly with the recurring author Vishal Gupta; superfluous concepts are explored. The primary lack exists in the methodology with an irregular method of analyzing entrepreneurship and gender. While secondary analyses and firsthand data collection is extensive, these are frequently **not gender-aware in their** approach. Studying complex concepts such as women entrepreneurship and economic development requires a campaign of mixed methodology. To state an example, Klasen & Pieters (2013) conduct a broad survey overview without considering women-centric indicators. This breaches into the verifiability and reliability of the papers. There is a distortion of the creation of standardized results to analyze the bond between women entrepreneurship and economic development.

In the wake of Covid-19, the pandemic-induced recession must be studied with the campaign of women entrepreneurship. A literature gap is the complete absence of how this generation's pandemic has not been considered while valuing how the worst-affected tertiary sector has experienced a positive or negative impact in relation to women entrepreneurship. At this time, it is integral to breakdown how we frame gender stereotypes and attempt to revive the economy with the help of the woman workforce.

3. RATIONALE

Maya Angelou, an advocate for civil rights and an author, wrote, "You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them." As a woman researcher, there is a never-ending toil to discover gender-inclusive and gender-aware studies. It is essential to look beyond the researcher's apperceptive background and beliefs to truly not be reduced by the knowledge created but empower women in their approach.

In the economy, the most efficient manner to cross the barriers is by setting the new rules by yourself and this is possible with entrepreneurship. As the literature review has repeatedly stated that entrepreneurship is a driving force of the economy, it is safe to assume that there will be constant attempts to scale its operations. But this is not possible if an entire demographic and section of the population, women are sidelined.

Women are subject to extensive scrutiny that stems from historical oppression. These have manifested in stereotypes that control their life choices. This research study is a positive discourse on the potential fruits from the labor of women entrepreneurs engaging in the economy. The author strives to use the tools of verified data that cannot be subjectively disputed to achieve a synchronized understanding of gaps in economic development in India. The methodology seeks to reflect the ideals of the paper by being sensitive to the articulation of gender in society; and ask questions in an analytical manner through the frame of gender.

In the heteronormative dialogue of economic possibilities, the study aims to stir women into becoming entrepreneurs and bettering the economic appearance of India. This paper will comprehensively persuade the inclusion of women by destabilizing gender stereotypes.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. AIM

To locate a correlation between women entrepreneurship and performance of the tertiary sector in India.

2. OBJECTIVES

Correlation and Explanatory Study

- To conduct and examine how gender stereotypes are embedded within economic development through the paradigm of entrepreneurship.
- To employ statistical tool of GDP along with theoretical articles to reinforce the notion of women entrepreneurship as an untapped opportunity in the economy.
- To create a narrative that prompts awareness or consciousness in investors while selecting to fund women entrepreneurs.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. *Can an economic gap (in terms of GDP) be recognized due to the existence gender stereotypes?*
2. *How do gender stereotypes shape entrepreneurship in India's economy?*

4. SAMPLE SIZE

The qualitative nature of this secondary analytical study warrants for a thorough review of academic articles including both, qualitative and quantitative inquiries into the realms of gender stereotypes, women entrepreneurship and economic development in India. Scrutiny of the relationship among these variables will be highlighted and enhanced by twenty to thirty peer-reviewed papers, census data and reports from viable sources. The filtered time period under survey will be 2010 to 2021. A focus will be placed on small and medium business enterprises owned by women entrepreneurs. The primary perusal will encompass a wide array

of information that involve “women entrepreneurship, gender stereotypes or economic development” in the title. The demographic location pertains to India, not limited to any particular city but rather, a nation-wide approach.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

As the GDP’s trajectory has been traced below, four primary quantitative themes or patterns were discovered –

1. Associating Recession with Women Entrepreneurs:

In 2011, the Indian economy plummeted to a GDP of 5.241 (World Bank). This can be credited to the recession witnessed in U.S.A in the first half of the year. Ray & Aditya (2011) highlighted the challenges of women entrepreneurship in special correlation to inadequacy of funding options. The researchers found that structural gender discrimination fogged the perceptions of banks in trusting entrepreneurs. On the other hand, Nandy & Kumar (2014) stated that during the 2008 recession, 5% of women and 4% of men left their jobs to start a new business. The researchers offer an argument for the apparent gender difference, that is, men and women have different manners of conducting business. Here, the authors attempted to divulge the “irrational” side of women as stated in the above-mentioned theme. Ray & Aditya (2011) correctly sum up that an economic crisis at hand places women entrepreneurs as the least prioritized in case of loan and interest concessions. This swiftly sidetracks into the next leg of the pattern being the Covid-19 virus.

2. Five Year Plans: Boon or Bane?

Pandian et al. (2012), Nandy & Kumar (2014) and Singh & Vinay (2015) falsely paint a picture of the Five-Year Plans as a beacon of hope. This is of contradiction in Singh & Vinay (2015) as the system of these economic plans was discontinued in that very year. While formulating these Five-Year Plans, arbitrary concepts of social constructions such as gender stereotypes are often disregarded. Through the assistance of this research, it can be found that the Five-Year Plans have shifted the focus from socialistic development to planned development; thereby, being unable to holistically improve the situation of women entrepreneurs in India.

3. Impact of the Rise of Social Media

The GDP trajectory correctly identifies that 2010 was the year with the highest economic progress within the 10-year span considered. A common pattern found was that the decade of 10s was plagued by the rise in social media and smartphones. With WhatsApp being introduced in 2009, the penetration of social media has grown significantly each year. Themes of women empowerment were highly encouraged on these platforms, leading to a growth in women-owned businesses. Referring back to Mishra (2010), "androgyny" which means the integration of feminine and masculine qualities, was offered to promote the fate of women entrepreneurs. It votes for the disintegration of gender stereotypes to create a sense of both nurturing and assertive characteristics within an individual. The researcher states that metropolitan cities are rapidly evolving and changing their gender and sex roles. This year is marked by a revolutionary shift towards acceptance of women as professionals. Coupled with the trend of social media and internet penetration, the GDP witnesses a boost.

4. Effect of the Covid-19 pandemic:

When the deadly pandemic struck India, there was a massive economic slowdown due to the shutdown of businesses. The GDP had been subjected to a blow of -7.965 (World Bank). Sangem (2020) conducted a secondary analysis to review the new set of challenges for women entrepreneurs. The study stated that when people were let go of their jobs, more women compared to men were fired. This directly correlates to the theme of an economic recession setting back the progress of women entrepreneurs. Singh & Vinay (2015) supported the argument presented by Sangem (2020) by stating that household responsibilities have burdened women to become busier and less mobile than men. As the lines between work and home were blurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, the potential of women entrepreneurs was curbed by their traditional household job roles. Yet, it has been clearly found that the pandemic was a period of intense innovation, creation and execution. With half of the workforce being subdued by unpaid care duties, the state of the economy would be difficult to revive.

With respect to qualitative themes focusing on the language and presentation of content, the research of women entrepreneurship displayed these similar characteristics –

5. Lack of Focused Research on Women Entrepreneurship:

The papers analyzed between 2010 to 2020 displayed a severe gap in their concentrated research. This is further supported by the literature review (Deshpande & Sethi, 2009; Sharma, 2013; Sarfaraz et al., 2014) that provides a broad overview of the scenario of women entrepreneurship. Studies primarily focus on defining the characteristics of women entrepreneurs, their quintessential hurdles and the government's supporting schemes (Nandy & Kumar, 2014; Singh & Vinay, 2015; Kokiloo & Kesharwani, 2019). Although the paper at hand considered the GDP during the survey, it can be found that the correlation is almost zero. The research tends to focus on the state of women entrepreneurs in general rather than bringing current context to the conversation. Varying economic, social, political, psychological and technological factors are blatantly ignored while describing the narrative of women entrepreneurs. This is highlighted in Nandy and Kumar (2014) as the authors acknowledge the lack of accounting for culture, values and ethnicity while understanding women entrepreneurship. Furthermore, a common pattern noticed was that researchers ceased to mention the income bracket of these entrepreneurs. Additionally, extensive research was inadequate to attain a quantifiable number of women entrepreneurs in the country every year; this proves that there is no measure or direct research conducted on women entrepreneurs.

6. Gender Bias in the Writing of Scholars:

This theme has discovered inherent sexism in the language used by the researchers while defining the role of women entrepreneurs. For example, Nandy & Kumar (2014) state that men value rationality and logic more than women. This statement can be presumed to hold biases of masculinity and femininity. As mentioned earlier, Gupta et al. (2009) identified that both, men and women perceive the field of entrepreneurship to be masculine. Researchers are prone to the fallacy of their apperceptive backgrounds i.e., involving their dynamic and internal view of the world. Moreover, Arakeri (2013) writes that women choose the career of entrepreneurship as it enables a work-life balance. The language alludes to the neoliberal theme which molds women to be contributors to the capitalist society. The encouraging tone lacks texture for the oppression of women and often forgets to report the struggles of women entrepreneurs in India in a narrow and detailed manner. Therefore, this can be linked to the need for gender-aware framework of writing. It can be realized that researchers must attempt to consciously choose their words to be gender-

neutral or gender-aware rather than following the innate biases, connotations and power dynamics.

7. Case Studies: Are they Entrepreneurs?

Most papers that were reviewed followed a conventional format which included case studies of successful women entrepreneurs at the end. Pandian et al. (2012) analyzed the stories of entrepreneurs such as Indra Nooyi, Lalita Gupta and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw to promote their stance of women contributing to the nation's well-being. An underlying factor is that the case studies symbolize the neoliberal ideals of feminism. As the epitome of triumph, these women have braved through and secured a work-life balance that some can only dream of. But what the researchers fail to mention is the unaccounted privilege and labor help that they have access to. Most middle-class women are unable to hire help for childcare and hence, have to create the stability by themselves. Another criticism that can be found in the rather loose definition of an entrepreneur – Indra Nooyi has been labelled as the quintessential women entrepreneur for being the CEO and Chairperson of PepsiCo. Yet, it is important to note that these are positions of employment chosen by a board of directors. In this research study, it has been distinctly stated that women entrepreneurs are those who own 51% of the capital / the enterprise. The mosaic of case studies incorporated by some research papers must be critically analyzed and decorated with caution.

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The findings corroborate with the research questions' target of an understanding of how gender stereotypes function and impact the economic position of women entrepreneurs. The secondary review spotlights the struggles of women entrepreneurs with respect to traditional roles that have been embedded into the fabric of society. Yet, there was a lack of evidence to prove a correlation with the fluctuating GDP. This is because of two main reasons – firstly, there was a gap in quantifiable data of the number of women entrepreneurs operating within the country, and secondly, a plethora of other factors such as politics, economic environment and policies and state of technology must be accounted for. The present study can state that there is an infatuation between women entrepreneurship and economic development. To build a romance and healthy marriage, there is must be extensive research on the topic.

The study adopts a unique method of reviewing a selected paper to illustrate the situation of women entrepreneurs in that particular year. While this was meant to pinpoint certain trends during the years, a holistic understanding was achieved. The research identified a conventional, routine and mundane pattern of writing about women entrepreneurs. After coming across several such papers, it begs the question – why are women entrepreneurs not studied from a narrow lens to comprehend their real-life struggles? The tones of encouragement, motivation and success often romanticize the idea of being a woman entrepreneur. This paper sought to break these notions and offer real arguments of gender stereotypes hindering the progress of the economy.

To conclude, it can be realized that women are beneficial contributors to the economic state of the country. With the help of research, this notion can be fashioned into a fact and women entrepreneurs can become the epitome of empowerment. Using a gender-aware framework, the relationship between women entrepreneurship and economic development must be comprehensively studied to generate motivating claims for the women of India.

VI. LIMITATIONS

The predominant limitation that is underlying this research study is the lack of adequate data with special emphasis on quantifiable statistics of women entrepreneurs in India. The correlation between women entrepreneurship and GDP was unable to be identified due to a past focus on the theories of women entrepreneurship rather than its implications. Thirdly, the methodology used to define the correlation can be deemed as vague as it attempts to make broader assumptions about women entrepreneurship and economic development through selective papers and data. Additionally, the data is incomplete and incoherent. One of the most essential limitations was the lack of accounting for environmental factors such as the economic, social, political, technological or psychological while ascertaining the state of women entrepreneurs. The correlation with GDP would be implicated by the above-mentioned elements and hence, an ignorance would lead to distorted results.

VII. FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The aim and attempt to integrate women entrepreneurship and economic development using a quantitative manner has been evidently less. This paper could open doors the conversation of collecting data to record the number of women entrepreneurs and base

correlations with respect to economic development. At this premature stage, the research study could be a lens to avoid gender stereotypes and to foster a social climate that is tonic for budding women entrepreneurs in India.

Various methodologies could be applied to this topic and expand the research scope such as a solely qualitative study which includes interviewing women entrepreneurs. This would allow the researcher to navigate the economic conditions in real-time and firsthand gauge the gender stereotypes entrenched in the system. Another focus point could be narrowing the study down to a particular sector (for example, Information Technology or Fashion) and attempt to draw correlations between the number of women entrepreneurs within the sector and contribution of that industry to the overall GDP growth in the country.

Lastly, the paper has sparked a discussion towards employing gender-aware frameworks while articulating concepts and findings in research. A future direction can comprise of creating a gender-aware or gender-neutral model of writing. The scope of this study is to spotlight on the empirical shortage of economic development in lieu of women entrepreneurship delayed by gender stereotypes. The paper strives to become an emblem for investors, in any form such venture capitalists, NGO or government organizations (whether novices or experts in funding) to eliminate their reservations of gender stereotypes and stimulate women entrepreneurship.

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A BATTLE OF THE SEXES: EXPLORING THE GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION DURING COVID-19^{1 2}

Abstract: This research explored the differences between India's male and female consumers regarding online purchase intention during Covid-19. Post the digital revolution, societies have begun to increasingly depend on technological solutions to save time, finances and effort — a reliance that heightens during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The data was collected from 15 male and 15 female participants via an online questionnaire and analysed using the Likert Scale to identify the gender differences in consumption values and attitudes towards e-commerce. Though the males garnered a higher mean attitudinal score towards online shopping, there was only a *meagre* difference between the two genders' scores. The major thematic differences regarding convenience, monetary aspects, personalisation, privacy and pleasure emerged. The data suggests that males tend to prioritise privacy concerns and budgetary aspects comparatively more than females, who tend to engage in window shopping and impulse buying. Interestingly, despite the genders' strong feelings of pleasure towards e-commerce, they retained a preference for the seller's personal attention and tended to attach supplementary emotions of belonging, community and enjoyment to physical retail. Thus, the present study aimed to provide insight into consumers' evolving psychological tendencies thereby facilitating knowledge generation for Indian firms.

Key Words:

Gender, Online Purchase Intention, Covid-19, E-commerce

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

Merely after few months after the outbreak of the *Coronavirus*, it transformed into a colossal threat to human civilisation. Despite differences in influence and size, each household has been victim to the painful socio-economic adversities that accompany such crises. Societies adapted to the pandemic's restrictions, particularly in the area of household consumption, where e-commerce flourished by providing consumers access to an array of products at their fingertips and delivered right to their doorstep. While on the surface it seemed as though

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consumers had started a new journey, within the household, disagreements regarding expenditure continued — now aggravated by reduced incomes and the double-edged convenience brought by online shopping. By taking a closer look at households that are more inclined towards e-commerce, this study aimed to provide insight into this issue while situating the gender at the forefront of India's changes in e-commerce use following the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this paper aimed to study the differences between male and female shoppers with regard to online purchase intention during the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking a bottom-up approach, the study employed secondary data and an online questionnaire to understand the distinct experiences of the modern Indian consumer.

Simply put, online purchase intention can be defined as *a situation where a consumer is willing and intends to make online transactions* (Pavlou, 2003). It is no surprise that during the lockdown period, citizens began falling back on technology-based solutions, particularly mobile phones (Kumar et al., 2020). Data suggests that more than 68% of Indian consumers have increased their online shopping (Tribune News Service, 2020) and the number of first-time e-commerce users has risen substantially (Halan & Retail, 2020). While the offline retail industry remains hindered by meagre growth, the e-commerce sector is enjoying a CAGR of more than 20% (NASSCOM Community, 2016). Though the social narrative propagates that women are perpetuating this boom, previous research has suggested that men exhibit greater confidence when shopping online (Khare & Rakesh, 2011). However, as consumption is both habitual and contextual, it is often influenced by technological, legal, personal, societal and environmental factors such as Covid-19. Thus, this paper hoped to explore if and how traditional roles regarding online purchase intention and behaviour have evolved in the wake of the pandemic.

With ever-expanding wants chasing limited resources, over-choice poses a daunting threat. Thus, it is crucial to simultaneously assist both consumers and firms, pushed to the verge of impoverishment, navigate this economic catastrophe. By identifying those receptive towards online advertisements and more inclined to shop online, effective segmentation and communication strategies can be curated. The present study can help companies identify their most valuable segments and attract similar prospective consumers to enhance their longevity, reputation and market share in the industry.

1.2 Secondary Data:

The secondary data points at the immense impact of online shopping on the Indian economy and its expansion during the pandemic period. In line with our study, it additionally suggests that the gender construct plays a crucial role in the e-commerce domain. Research from Global Data proposes that India's e-commerce sector's sales are projected to grow at a CAGR of approximately 18% to contribute up to 8.8 trillion rupees between 2021-2025 (Rozario, 2021). Rakuten Insight's survey (2020) on Indian shopping behaviour proves that Covid-19 is a major catalyst of this growth by displaying that 29% of their respondents continually purchased groceries, hygiene products, household cleaning items and the like during the pandemic period. For years, global studies have attempted to explore the gender heterogeneity present in online sales. While some propose that women buy 7 times faster than men in online-retail environments (Adglow, n.d.), others highlight that men make up for 58% of the total online clothing sales as compared to a mere 30% by women (Das, 2019).

1.3 Theories and Definitions:

Online purchase intention is considered as "a situation where a consumer is willing and intends to make online transactions" (Pavlou, 2003). Gender is regarded as "the roles and expectations attributed to men and women in a given society, roles which change over time, place, and life stage" (Phillips, 2005). This research uses attitudes' conceptualization as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directing or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Allport, 1935). Similarly, the ABC Model suggests that attitude consists of three elements: the Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive aspect. While the Affective component refers to one's feelings towards the attitude object, the Behavioural component refers to one's intent towards the same. Finally, the Cognitive aspect involves one's beliefs or knowledge regarding the aforementioned attitude object (Ostrom, 1969). Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains and predicts one's acceptance of Information Technology, based on subjective perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and compatibility (Davis, 1989).

1.4 Need for the Study:

The need for study hints at the gender inequality in online retail environments while focusing on the need to reconnect companies with their consumers through enhanced targeting, segmentation and marketing strategies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, global consumers'

needs, wants, preferences and tastes have inevitably evolved. The present research can offer a valuable understanding of this new personality of the consumer thereby allowing practitioners to curate better marketing strategies. As Covid-19's fiscal aftershocks are predicted to continue threatening India after the pandemic wanes, the researcher hopes to help the nation regain its status as the fastest-growing economy in the world by enabling its local brands to better understand their consumers (Nag, 2020). In order to achieve this, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises must first dive into the intricacies of consumer research — something that the present study hopes to facilitate by helping them understand the Indian psyche. Unlike in international markets, Indian companies are only just beginning to understand the cruciality of building customer-centric organisations. Thus, the present study aimed to equip domestic enterprises with the tools they require to compete globally. As several Indian businesses have been pushed to the verge of shutdown, or have incurred immense losses at the very least, this study hopes to help brands reconnect with their consumers in order to boost brand loyalty and repurchase rates.

Another important aspect of this topic is to understand how women entrepreneurs are performing and participating in e-commerce. Research proves that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted women's sales in South-East Asian markets with a reduction of approximately 27% in the Philippines and 44% in Indonesia. By grasping women's opportunities and barriers — from both the consumer and vendor point of view — the present study can help reinforce gender equality in online retail environments (International Finance Corporation et al., 2021). Finally, it is important to note that a thorough investigation into the link between gender and online purchase intention, against the backdrop of a global catastrophe, has not yet been adequately attended within the Indian context.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Empirical Research Studies:

In the modern world, mankind is constantly racing against time. With the digital transformation and consequent popularity of the Internet and Information technology, society soon began to exploit the newfound ease of accessing and sharing knowledge. In a time of increasing wants and demanding lifestyles, the inception of e-commerce infrastructure offered the attractive opportunity to source a wide array of products at the mere click of a phone or laptop button. Regardless of their geographic location, consumers can now avail themselves of

speedy, 24x7 shopping services, curated specifically for their tastes (Muda et al., 2016). Though purchase behaviour has previously been examined in various marketing contexts, the present research emphasises on *purchase intention* by upholding the belief that intentions are the key predictor of actual behaviour (Montano and Kasprzyk, 2015). Previous literature suggests that factors including perceived risk, perceived usefulness, perceived reputation and perceived trust significantly influence one's willingness to shop online (Muda et al., 2016). While some theorists uphold the website-oriented perspective by suggesting that purchase facilitation enhances purchase intention (Van der Heijden et al., n.d.), others accept a variety of factors including attitudes, self-efficacy, subjective norms, buying impulse and even national culture (Peña-García et al., 2020).

With respect to the Indian subcontinent, data suggests that despite having low internet penetration, the nation follows closely behind China and the USA in terms of the number of internet users. Though before 2009 the e-commerce domain was dominated by the travel sector, the rising per-capita income of citizens, government initiatives in the telecom industry and superior distribution chains have encouraged city-dwellers to spend a greater amount of time and money online. In India, impulse intention, prior experience and online trust tend to have a substantial influence on consumers' online purchase intention (Thamizhvanan & Xavier, 2013). Being an emerging economy, the nation acts as an attractive potential market for online retailers who hope to target various segments including students, who exhibit familiarity with electronic mediums and spend several hours browsing online. Within this category, factors including convenience, flexibility, utilitarian shopping value and ease of finding product and price information tend to mould online purchase intention (Khare & Rakesh, 2011). Considering India's diverse population, most consumers have historically preferred conventional stores due to their leaning towards neighbourhood shops where they could negotiate prices and experience the product. Owing to their cost-conscious values, they tended not to make impulsive purchase decisions based on advertising strategies.

However, the novel Coronavirus revolutionised shopping patterns by forcing existing online shoppers to stock up on essential items and other segments to embrace e-commerce. Due to the overwhelming response, India's leading e-retailers including *Big Basket* and *Amazon* faced logistical breakdown owing to this unprecedented demand (Halan & Retail, 2020). Eventually, The World Health Organization officially declared a pandemic outbreak on 11th March, 2020. With raging fear and uncertainty, predictions of shortages pushed consumers to hoard supplies, retailers to enter the black market, supply chains to break down and e-commerce to flourish (Patil et al., 2020). Whether through the rise in category-based

demand, the number of mobile online shoppers, the sale of essential goods, the expansion of remote working or the entrance of new demographics, Covid-19 changed the status of e-commerce (NASSCOM Community, 2021). Manu Nanda et al. (2019) have identified factors including income, range, ease of returns, delivery services and advertisements to influence consumers' changing perspectives. Overall, financial (eg. earnings, future income, saving attitude etc.), non-financial (eg. technological development and advertisements), psychological (eg. perception, motivation, beliefs and attitudes) and social determinants (eg. class and reference groups) have influenced consumer behaviour during the pandemic (Patil et al., 2020).

Finally, we approach the theme of gender as another emphasis point within the present study. Within the domain of e-commerce, numerous gender differences in terms of purchase patterns have emerged over the years. Previous research on Indian consumers suggests that males tend to employ mobile banking services more than their female counterparts (Joshua and Koshy, 2011) and that the latter are more vigilant of the risks and privacy concerns associated with online shopping. While both genders may equally utilize such platforms when engaging in mobile or electronic commerce, women tend to be more sensitive towards negative consumer reviews (Bae and Lee, 2011). Though the recent advancements in technology attempt to offer equivalent resources and internet access to both genders, females tend to base their online-purchase decisions on emotional and hedonic factors while male shoppers primarily consider the convenience and cost-saving aspects (Raja & Sabyasachi, 2016). In fact, some researchers go further to propose that males tend to adopt a cold and clinical approach based on objectivity and hard facts when shopping online (James, 2013). Though a majority of studies on online purchase intention favour males, one must identify the opportunities and barriers faced by South-East Asian women on e-commerce platforms in order to obtain a realistic picture of the consumer journey (International Finance Corporation et al., 2021). It is only when we dive into the intricacies of the market that we will truly hear the stories and experiences of the modern Indian consumer during the Covid-19 catastrophe.

2.2 Research Gap:

Though gender has always been a crucial factor in both societal and scholastic contexts, it remains a poorly-described construct in the e-commerce environment (Szymkowiak & Garczarek-Bąk, 2018). While researchers have attempted to study gender differences in areas ranging from e-learning and information retrieval to communication technologies and electronic mail, the academic society continues to grapple with a mixed bag of results. While previous empirical studies have explored online-purchase intention in particular domains, the

researcher adopted a holistic approach by combining sociological, economic and psychological lenses. Moreover, the unprecedented outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity to explore how the traditional behaviours regarding online shopping have evolved in Mumbai. Owing to a comparative shortage of such studies within the Indian context, the present research hoped to gain insight into the domestic sphere and understand how *Mumbaikars* have employed e-resources to navigate through the pandemic's restrictions.

2.3 Rationale of the Study:

During natural catastrophes, such as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the societal framework finds itself under threat. It must then adapt, grow and evolve in order to sustain itself and those it holds within. When such calamities are supplemented by the cut-throat competition of the modern world, brands are left increasingly vulnerable to collapse. They must thereby react to the curveballs thrown at them by truly understanding and efficiently meeting their consumers' needs. The present study emphasizes upon the popular avenue of e-commerce, that most citizens — and companies— fell back upon in the wake of the pandemic's restrictions. By employing a holistic approach and emphasizing on the Indian context, the researcher hoped to help readers navigate through the fiery debates and varied results that characterize the study of online shopping. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity to explore how the traditional behaviours regarding e-commerce have evolved.

Gender itself remains an under-studied construct in the e-commerce sphere despite its substantial impact on one's decision-making process (Szymkowiak & Garczarek-Bąk, 2018). In fact, research proves female consumers are more likely to have discovered a new e-commerce store where they would continue to shop after the pandemic ceases and are thus central to economic growth (International Finance Corporation et al., 2021). As we hope to approach the post-pandemic era, an understanding of the link between consumer gender and online purchase intention could potentially help millions of Indian brands stay afloat. Thus, the present study can aid economic revival by offering an insight into the behavioural and psychological tendencies of existing and prospective consumers in order to influence their purchase decisions by informing brands about the importance of consumer research, helping them better understand their target market and thus mould their advertising strategies accordingly, employment, profit and market demand can be improved.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim:

To explore the differences between India's male and female consumers with respect to online purchase intention during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to facilitate knowledge generation for the benefit of domestic companies' marketing strategies.

3.2 Objectives:

The major objectives of this research are to help online marketers gain insight into the behavioural and psychological tendencies of existing and prospective urban Indian consumers to influence their purchase decisions. There is emphasis to understand and identify the factors affecting consumers' online shopping behavior while specifically elucidating them in the Indian context. Moreover, this research tries to add to the understanding of the young brands in curating segmentation and targeting strategies directed towards optimal returns. The findings can contribute to empower weakened brands to recover, survive and thrive in the wake of the pandemic and its accompanying restrictions. The study also tries to understand the social narrative by studying how purchasing power and traditional gender roles have evolved in the modern digital age.

3.3 Research Questions:

This research aims to investigate the existence and nature of a relationship between a consumer's gender and their inclination towards online-purchase behaviour in order to inform firms' targeting and segmentation strategies. Moreover, there is an attempt to explore whether and how traditional patterns of purchase have transformed against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.4 Sample Size:

Data was collected from 15 male and 15 female participants falling within the age range of 20 to 60 years. Moreover, the scope of the study was restricted to urban metro cities in India.

3.5 Tools/Measurement/Survey:

For this quantitative study, the researcher employed an online *Google Forms* questionnaire as the chief tool for collecting primary data. The said survey was distributed to 15 male and 15 female participants and was filled over a period of 20 days. To overcome the obstacles of the

pandemic, while also protecting the privacy and sanctity of the participants, the anonymity-assuring questionnaire was self-administered. Essentially, the survey consisted of 4 sections. The first section offered a brief description of the study and asked for the respondents' formal consent before moving on. Next, the second part of the questionnaire requested demographic information from the respondents and thus revolved around inquiries regarding gender, age, nationality and the like. Considering the focus of the present research, this section also included questions about the participants' purchase frequency, shopping preferences, access to technology and so on.

Fundamentally, the third section made up for the bulk of the survey and additionally offered instructions to the respondents. Consisting of 15 statements, part 3 focused on gender differences in online shopping and addressed a wide range of themes within the e-commerce domain including those regarding payment preferences and privacy concerns. Finally, part 4 centered around online-shopping during the pandemic period. Under each declaration, participants were required to exhibit their degree of agreement or disagreement with the aforementioned statement via a 5 point rating scale. Essentially, respondents had to choose whether they '*Strongly Agree*,' '*Agree*,' '*Neither Agree nor Disagree*,' '*Disagree*,' or '*Strongly Disagree*' with a given item. By utilizing a Likert Scale, the researcher hoped to gauge and compare the attitudes of males and females towards a given stimulus object. Within the diverse array of declarations, the researcher introduced a mix of positive statements and negative statements (Q3, Q8 & Q10) to reduce the possibility of extreme response bias and acquiescence bias. The key distinction between the two kinds of declarations appears during scoring. As displayed below, negative items, as opposed to positive items, were reverse scored i.e the numerical scoring scale must run in the opposite direction.

DIRECT SCORING - POSITIVE STATEMENTS				
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
5	4	3	2	1

REVERSE SCORING - NEGATIVE STATEMENTS				
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	2	3	4	5

For the purpose of scoring, males and females were divided into Group 1 and Group 2 respectively. For the first grouping, each participant's responses were analysed and scored according to the aforementioned numerical scoring tables. This group's scores were then inputted into a raw data table consisting of *Subject Number* on the y axis and *Statement Number* on the x axis. Post this, a total was derived for each statement. Once the totals of all items were added to generate an aggregate summation, the formula $\bar{x} = (\Sigma xi) / n^1$ was employed to obtain a mean attitudinal score for the group under consideration. The entire scoring process was then repeated for the second group. The 2 mean attitudinal scores of Group 1 and Group 2 were then compared to arrive at a conclusion.

4. Results and Discussion

During the course of data analysis, the researcher gained insight into the intricacies of Indian consumers' e-commerce usage during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the data suggests that the male respondents garnered a higher mean attitudinal score towards online shopping as opposed to their female counterparts, there is an overall *meagre* difference between the scores of the two genders. Nevertheless, the research revealed interesting thematic differences between males and females. Major themes including efficiency and convenience, monetary aspect, scope for personalization, privacy and pleasure emerged during the analysis stage. Thus, there *does* exist a relationship between a consumer's gender and their approach towards online-purchase behaviour — an inclination guided by an array of variables. The findings offer insight into the behavioural and psychological tendencies of the urban Indian consumer and can thereby inform firms' targeting and segmentation strategies. Essentially, the researcher explored the nature of consumers' online purchases, their primary reason for employing e-commerce, the aforementioned thematic gender differences as well as additional insights about consumers' overall approach towards online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A majority of the participants employed e-commerce platforms primarily to satisfy their need for fashion followed by electronics and household items. The following image displays that luxury items were the least purchased category of goods via the online medium during the pandemic period. Privacy concerns and the pandemic-induced economic distress may explain this pattern of online purchase behaviour. Though a majority of respondents (n=25) named Amazon to be their preferred online retailer, other brands including Myntra, Flipkart and H&M

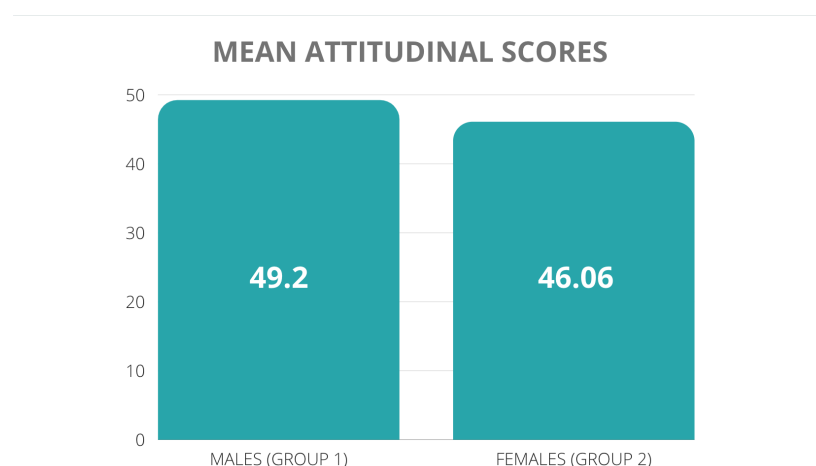
¹ \bar{x} = Mean, Σ = Summation, xi = The aggregate summation derived from the items, n = Number of respondents in a group

gained recognition as well. Moreover, 63.3% (n=19) of subjects displayed a weekly online purchase frequency.

Interestingly, 80% of the respondents (n=24) cited 'Convenience' as their primary reason for engaging in e-commerce during the pandemic while only 3.3% (n=1) of the participants cited safety reasons. In fact, the data suggests that 'Boredom' and 'Product Range' were comparatively more popular reasons for shopping online during Covid-19. This finding supports the argument that consumers may continue engaging in e-commerce post the pandemic period once the threat to safety ceases.

Gender Differences in Online Shopping

The data suggests that the male participants have been exhibiting a greater degree of online purchase intention and behaviour during the pandemic-period, with a mean attitudinal score of 49.2, as opposed to the female subjects who generated a lower mean attitudinal score of 46.06 towards e-commerce. However, it is important to note the meagre difference between the scores of the both genders. While the traditional male dominance in online retail environments seems to continue, women *are* indeed gaining a greater inclination to embrace e-commerce solutions possibly due to reasons such as financial independence, autonomy in decision making or simply pandemic-induced necessity.



A. Efficiency and Convenience

Though most male and female respondents believed that online shopping is a more efficient manner of fulfilling their wants, a comparatively greater number of male subjects ($n=12$) were in agreement as compared to the females ($n=11$). Interestingly, while 40% of all participants ($n=12$) preferred that all their fashion, grocery and electronic requirements be met through online shopping platforms, 36.7% of them ($n=11$) disagreed. In this case, males and females showed similar response patterns. Finally, an equal number of participants agreed and disagreed with the belief that the waiting and delivery period associated with online commerce is always worth the benefits. Importantly, only one female respondent agreed with an aforementioned declaration while 60% ($n=9$) of males did. Overall, within the theme of convenience, males and females exhibited similar response patterns. However, the implication that the waiting period associated with e-commerce may deter females from making online purchases can inform brands about how to enhance the consumer experience and thereby capture a lucrative customer segment.

B. Monetary Aspect

While a majority ($n=10$) of the male respondents were confident that the money spent on online shopping websites is money well-spent, most female subjects ($n=7$) remained neutral towards the statement. Similarly, not one female respondent expressed the belief that she saves more money when engaging in e-commerce as opposed to during in-person shopping. Contrarily, 40% of males ($n=6$) were confident that they successfully economize while shopping online. This might further justify why 73.34% ($n=11$) of the male subjects were more willing to pay an additional shipping and home-delivery fee as opposed to only 53.34% ($n=8$) of the female participants. The general trend implies that males tend to economize while shopping online by directing funds towards products that they truly require as opposed to women who seem more likely to engage in 'impulse-buying' for products on which their money is not necessarily 'well-spent.' The aforementioned findings can guide everything from a brand's choice of delivery partner to their targeting of offers and discounts.

C. Scope for Personalization

A majority of the males ($n=7$) and females ($n=8$) were united in disagreeing with the declaration that there is no flexibility or scope for customization when shopping for items online. In fact, a major and equal number of male and female respondents expressed the belief that there is a better variety of items available online than in physical retail environments.

Despite this positive stance towards e-commerce, it is essential to note that a majority of the males (n=9) and females (n=10) expressed that they do not mind the effort involved in going to a physical store for the personal attention given to their needs. The general trend suggests that both males and females have a positive attitude towards the flexibility, variety and customization options available online. Nevertheless, their inherent preference for the seller's personal attention proves that e-commerce companies must enhance their customer service silos in order to compete with physical retailers.

D. Privacy

Approximately a major and equal number of male and female respondents disagreed with the idea that their personal and financial information is kept confidential when buying products online. However, while 40% (n=6) of the male subjects said that privacy concerns would prevent them from using e-commerce platforms, only 26.7% (n=4) of the female respondents believed that they would exhibit such restraint. Interestingly, while 60% (n= 9) i.e a majority of the males agreed that e-commerce allows them to be more private about their purchases, a majority i.e. 46.7% (n=7) of the female participants disagreed with the same. The general trend suggests that privacy concerns could potentially become a major obstacle to e-commerce, especially for males, and thus need to be mitigated before widespread expansion. From a social perspective, the finding that males can be more private about their online perspective *may* suggest that a majority of Indian women continue to exhibit financial dependence or that the items they purchase online are directed towards familial collective consumption rather than individual usage.

E. Pleasure

A comparatively greater number of female respondents (80% ; n=12) agreed that they often find themselves on e-commerce platforms including Amazon, Nykaa, Flipkart and the like as opposed to 66.7% (n=10) of the male subjects. Nevertheless, approximately the same number of males (80% ; n=12) and females (86.7%; n=13) expressed the dominant belief that they get excited after seeing the new package that arrives after online shopping. Despite this positive stance towards e-commerce, a majority of both males (53.34% ; n=8) and females (60%, n=9) said they would much rather go to a restaurant and enjoy fresh food than order it through food-delivery apps such as Swiggy or Zomato. While women tend to e-browse or 'window shop' comparatively more than males, both the genders have strong feelings of pleasure associated with e-commerce that can be capitalized on by emerging brands. However, the data suggests

that consumers often have supplementary emotions of belonging, community and enjoyment associated with physical retail. Thus e-commerce brands, including F&B and fashion retailers, should attempt to replicate these factors on their platforms in order to boost profit and market penetration.

E-commerce During the Covid-19 Pandemic

A majority of the participants (56.67% ; n=17) admitted to shopping online more often during the pandemic than they had been before the outbreak. Similarly, 80% (n=12) of the study's males as well as 93.3% (n=14) of the female respondents said that they often found themselves browsing through e-commerce stores during the lockdown. Interestingly, as opposed to 66.67% (n=10) of males, 86.67% of females (n= 13) reported that the pandemic changed the frequency and nature of what they buy online. Owing to the 'caregiver' role that tends to be ascribed to the female in Indian households, it is possible that the pandemic's restrictions made females turn to e-commerce to obtain household, hygiene and grocery items — products directed towards collective rather than individual consumption. Finally, a majority of the participants (53.34% , n = 16) said that they would continue to engage in e-commerce at the same rate as they had been during the pandemic. However, females took the upper hand here by a small margin. Both males and females expressed the belief that online shopping boosted their mood and happiness during the dull pandemic-period. The participants reported that the benefits of online-shopping were specifically enhanced during the first mandated lockdown when there were long lines, limited supplies & curfew restrictions at physical stores. During this period, e-commerce allowed them to procure their essentials without compromising safety measures. Both male and female subjects reported that as online shopping kills the need to travel and acts as the bridge between convenience and safety, the 'habit' of shopping online is likely to continue.

5. Conclusion and Future Directions

In conclusion, there *do* exist differences between the online buying patterns of India's male and female consumers. The widespread Covid-19 pandemic profoundly impacted consumers' perception of e-commerce and encouraged the nation to embrace its benefits. Regardless of gender, citizens have upheld such platforms as their saving grace during a time when physical retail environments were inaccessible or simply unsafe. The findings of the current study suggest that India's male consumers have been exhibiting a greater degree of online purchase intention during the Covid-19 pandemic — albeit by a small margin. Though males have

traditionally dominated the online shopping ecosystem, the present research proves that Indian women are becoming important players in the digital world of e-commerce. Interesting thematic differences regarding privacy concerns, pleasure, personalization, financials and convenience emerged during the course of the present study. The data suggests that both the genders have strong feelings of pleasure associated with e-commerce and display a positive attitude towards the flexibility, variety and customization options available online. However, it was found males tend to economize comparatively more while shopping online and are also more likely to be influenced by privacy concerns. Contrarily, females are more likely to engage in impulse-buying, window-shopping, and purchase the items required for collective household consumption. Interestingly, both the genders retained an inherent preference for the seller's personal attention and attached supplementary emotions of belonging, community and enjoyment to physical retail. Nevertheless, the general trend suggests that both men and women displayed a clear leaning towards e-commerce as opposed to physical retail — a tendency that is predicted to continue. While physical stores have enjoyed the upper hand when it comes to immediacy, personal attention and the fulfilment of supplementary emotions, e-commerce is now attempting to replicate these experiences online. It is no wonder that the market opportunities for India's e-commerce are estimated to reach approximately \$200 billion by 2026.

Essentially, the findings of the present study can guide existing and prospective e-retailers while curating targeting and positioning strategies that create enhanced value for the consumer through better customization, thereby boosting retailer profits. Moreover, it can assist policymakers in implementing communication strategies that inform low-income segments about the same benefits of e-commerce that higher-income groups traditionally capitalize upon. The researcher believes that the future growth of the digital economy depends on the integration of the fundamentals of e-commerce selling into the mainstream curriculum. An improvement of digital financial services, awareness of the risks associated with the e-commerce ecosystem and governmental implementation of effective on-boarding and due-diligence processes is critical to the creation of a healthy digital future. Finally, future e-commerce retailers should consider replicating the benefits of the conventional shopping experience by enhancing the navigation, browsing, payment and 'trial-room' functions (Agarwal & Pradeep, 2013).

The researcher believes that future research should further explore *why* such gender-based thematic differences emerged during the present study and whether the discovered online

purchase behavioral patterns continue once the pandemic's restrictions cease. Moreover, it would be interesting to learn how Indian firms are applying and integrating the insights into their business models and thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. Not only should subsequently market research study the evolved and technologically-savvy Indian female audience but future studies should also consider consumers of different castes, religions, creeds and classes in order to offer a holistic image of the e-commerce ecosystem in India. Finally, future research should dive into deeper structural issues including competition in e-commerce markets, digital capabilities and regulatory frameworks in order to aid India's progress in the digital world.

6. Limitations

The sampling method accounted predominantly for upper-class individuals residing in urban metro cities and thereby failed to consider the shopping behaviors of minority communities whose preferences and privileges may vary greatly from those of other groups. Owing to the *Acquiescence bias*, some respondents displayed a tendency to repeatedly agree with the research statements even though this response may not be a true reflection of their position. The questionnaire methodology did not allow the researcher to gauge the emotion or truth behind the responses. Furthermore, a relatively small sample size of 30 respondents participated in the study thereby reducing the generalizability of the findings.

7. Ethical Considerations

During the course of this study, the researcher upheld the ethical protocols of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and safety of the participants.

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THE ACADEMIC AND THE OTHER: HOWARD BELSEY'S ALIENATING LANGUAGE(S) IN ZADIE SMITH'S *ON BEAUTY*¹

Abstract

In On Beauty (2005), Zadie Smith succinctly highlights the differences between academic and personal registers. These variations in language play an important role in facilitating either connection or distance between the characters, who seem to be demarcated into the ranks of the academics and the 'others' (who exist outside the ivory tower). This study would focus on the novel's anti-hero Howard Belsey, a white professor of art history. He is unable to connect with his family, and repeatedly, blame for this is put on the academic language he chooses to use. This research will explore the various theories of language – from its more abstract conceptions (drawing on Plato's ideas of pure concepts, post-structuralism, and more) to a more focused look into pedagogic language. For this, we will look at the works of scholars like Freire and Bourdieu. The proposed study would look at relevant theories of language to understand the various conflicts that arise in Howard's life due to language and how it creates a ripple effect onto those around him.

Section One: Introduction

Zadie Smith returns to form with her fourth novel, *On Beauty* (2005), a highly comedic and humane piece of fiction. While it can be classified as a campus novel, the tag of an academic novel seems more fitting, as it features '[...] those who work as academics, although the action is rarely confined to a campus, and they portray adult predicaments in marriage and home as well as the workplace, most familiarly yielding mid-life crisis plots' (Williams 561). In *On Beauty*, we are introduced to the liberal, racially-mixed Belsey's, consisting of Howard, his partner Kiki and their three children: Jerome, Zora and Levi. This eclectic bunch have a less than traditional familial life – one that the novel follows closely, with no one character getting more or less 'screen-time' than the other.

It is difficult, therefore, to identify one single protagonist in this novel. However, for our intents and purposes, we will close in on our primary academic, Howard Belsey. A 50-something year old white English scholar, Howard leans into every stereotype conceivable regarding academics. James Lasdun, writing for *The Guardian*, describes him as someone '[...] who starts out like an escapee from a Malcolm Bradbury novel but whose limitless capacity for folly keeps deepening and strangely sweetening his character'. This is but one review of Howard; others find that '[...] his myopic, uncritical immersion in poststructuralist theory and his extremely negative attitude to representational art lead to his inability to appreciate beauty

¹ Amatulla Mukadam is an undergraduate student, specializing in Literature, studying in the Jyoti Dalal School of Liberal Arts. This paper is an abridged version of research undertaken from June to November 2021.

either in art or in life and, ... to his inability to achieve proper human involvement' (Grmelova 2012).

These criticisms align with the portrait of academics that we usually see in works of this kind. Howard's dilemmas throughout the novel are persistent, wherein he emerges out of one bad situation just to find himself embroiled in another one. Sally Dalton-Brown talks about how academics find themselves in these messes in her article titled 'Is There Life Outside of (the Genre of) the Campus Novel?':

Just so must the academic struggle on campus and outside, unsure of his role in a world in which he is no longer the cloistered scholar, or a figure in the ivory tower of academe, but is rather a deeply troubled member of a contemporary cultural landscape permeated by an equally ambiguous attitude toward the role, and status of, the life of the mind in an increasingly reified world. (2008, pp. 592)

In an essay for *The Guardian*, responding to James Wood's critique of modern fiction, Zadie Smith explores her own questions about writing with 'feeling' versus writing using technicalities. In defense of the so-called 'clever writing' of David Foster-Wallace and Jonathan Franzen (amongst others), she passionately decries: 'I truly hope they are not cowed by these renewed assaults on "clever writing", calls for the "death of irony", the "return of heart". There was always a great deal of "heart", of humanity, in these writers.'

Smith's own hopes lead me to my larger question for this study: does language devoid of emotions, of 'heart' – in this case, academic language – serve as a means of alienating academics from 'others'? Here, our academic is Howard, and I aim to understand his estrangement from his family and work due to the alienating nature of the language he employs. Pierre Bourdieu highlights why the study of language is important at all: 'We are aware that [...] words are loaded with unequal weights, depending on who utters them and how they are said [...] that language is an integral part of social life [...] that a good part of our social life consists of the routine exchange of linguistic expressions' (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 1).

This study also considers how it is the very nature of language to be alienating. It is difficult to translate ideas from abstract thought to linguistic articulation. This evasive nature of language lends itself to academic language, as well. Academics' '[w]ords are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity' (Freire, 2018, pp. 44). The theme of pedagogy and its language being alienating repeatedly emerges across the works of scholars like Freire, Giroux and Bourdieu. They talk about how language stands as a barrier between the teacher and the student. Further, they address how this could be influenced by the university systems and structures that are giving way to neoliberal demands. Bourdieu, in two of his seminal works, *Homo Academicus* (1984) as well as *Language and*

Symbolic Power (1982), allows us to draw inferences between the academic and the importance of their, as well as others' language. The proposed study would look at relevant theories of language to understand the various conflicts that arise in Howard's life due to *language* and how it creates a ripple effect onto those around him.

Literature Review

For this research, my primary source is Zadie Smith's novel *On Beauty* (2005), a modern-day reconstruction of E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910). The novel covers multiple themes: the insular world of academia, class struggles, race, nationality, ambition and love (romantic and platonic). Smith's writing style has been lauded and discredited in equal measure.

Gemma Lopez, in an important study of the novel titled 'After Theory: Academia and the Death of Aesthetic Relish in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*' questions whether academia can 'account for a feeling that exceeds the limits imposed by reason through a discourse that has traditionally been based on reason itself' (Lopez, 2010, pp. 353). Additionally, she investigates whether academics forgo the instinctive feelings of rapture that beauty evokes by focusing so heavily on theory (this is something we observe Howard doing, as well).

Janice Rossen puts forth in *The University in Modern Fiction* (1993), '[g]iven the fact that the University holds an important place in our culture, it, therefore, follows that we should give attention to fiction about it because of its self-proclaimed connection with actual institutions' (Rossen, 1993, pp. 1). Sally Dalton-Brown's article 'Is There Life Outside of (the Genre of) the Campus Novel?' elaborates on how the university '[...] can be a place of exclusion and marginalization, rife with class-consciousness, misogyny, competition, and xenophobia. And sex' (Dalton-Brown, 2008, pp. 595).

The image of a teacher is demystified for us by Paulo Freire, in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). Freire says that the teacher-student relationship has a 'narrative character', where the teacher 'talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable' (Freire, 2018, pp. 44). The teacher's task seems to be to 'fill' the students with these facts that are 'disconnected from the totality that ... could give them significance' (2018, pp. 44).

To theorize the alienation that we are investigating, I will begin by looking at Marx's theory of alienation, and then trace its evolution into our contemporary times. In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx talks with great feeling about the concept of alienation in his chapter titled 'Estranged Labour'. He argues that the worker has descended to

the level of a mere commodity and that this is having an adverse impact on their self-worth and identity. Alienation in this context would be defined as a “sense of exclusion and separation”. We can further theorise this alienation in the context of our primary text by thinking about the fact that academics are losing ‘ownership... and control of the process and product of instruction’ (Robinson, 2015, pp. 18) because of the pressures universities are facing as they become more ‘diversified, expanded, globalized, internationalized, borderless/ edgeless, marketized, technologized, and neo-liberalized’ (2015, pp. 17).

The methodology for this project would depend on the textual criticism of Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty*. I will be perusing existing literature on Zadie Smith, on theories of language, and pedagogic language to build on my research. I will also look at caricatures of other academics in academic fiction to see if there are parallels between them and our protagonist for this research. The research paradigm is qualitative, relying on a hermeneutical route of study. This is because it focuses on interpreting and re-interpreting literary texts from different contexts. The research will mainly be of a literary and descriptive nature.

Through my research, I aim to understand the nature of academic language as alienating for an academic from the ‘others’ around them in Smith’s *On Beauty*. The text is an essential reference to understand the truly important nature of language and its various forms in our quotidian lives. I am interested in exploring this question through the lens of an insider, which will provide an interesting perspective about how people working within and belonging to the ivory tower become embroiled in petty feuds due to an inability to ‘code-switch’ between personal and academic registers. This ‘otherises’ them as well as the people they are addressing. Further, this research will look at the theories of language from Plato to post-structuralism to understand the futility of communication in general. The research question I hope to answer is if academic language alienates academics from the ‘others’ around them. I will explore this question using theories on language and liberal education in Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* (2005).

Section Two: *On (Academic) Language and Alienation*

Nothing to be done: language is always a matter of force, to speak is to exercise a will for power; in the realm of speech there is no innocence, no safety.
— *Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers*, Roland Barthes, pg. 192

Language presents itself to us in a deceptively simple package – we are seemingly ‘born’ with it, we grow up speaking it, and we take it for granted that the things we say will be

understood by the speakers of the same language. However, it does not take long for us to understand that we are all absolutely incomprehensible to each other. A spectacularly inane characteristic of an otherwise highly evolved species, we have taken the gift of speech and language and somehow made that into something that can cause rifts amongst us instead of something that should very obviously be used to bridge that gap.

This impassioned and informal introduction serves only to point me towards the focus of this research – language and the various forms in which it manifests itself in our quotidian lives. Scholars studying language across time have explored it different multifaceted ways: from Plato's Theory of Ideas, to Descartes' Cartesian Linguistics (postulated by Noam Chomsky), to Saussure's structuralism and finally to poststructuralism and deconstructionist theories of language. To understand the turns that language has taken over time, we begin with Plato, who proposed the Theory of Ideas in his seminal work, *The Republic*.

We listen in on a conversation between Socrates and Glaucon, where Socrates says: '[...] all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them' (Plato, 2007, pp. 328). Here, Socrates believes that the physical world is not the real world – instead, everything exists in the ultimate reality beyond our world. This world, which he calls the Realm of Forms, is the 'true' blueprint for every idea that we have, and that the physical world is simply an imitation or shadow of the Realm of Forms.

For our purposes, this means that ideas are the ultimate reality. The idea exists before 'the thing itself', which becomes its copy. Socrates believes that a painter imitates what the artist has created, and the artist in turn imitates what exists in nature. However, what exists in nature is yet another copy – for example, a tree simply embodies its spiritual idea. All of this is a prelude to say that any copy of any idea will always fall short of the original, as it is at least once removed from reality. We can infer that language, in this sense, is a copy of itself – because the things that we say are translated from our thoughts (the original, inimitable idea) – which becomes its downfall in serving as a reliable method of communication.

This leads us directly to what the poststructuralists have to say about language, which is that it is a temporal process, something whose meaning we can never 'close our fists over' (Eagleton, 1996, pp. 111). In his book on literary theory, Terry Eagleton sums up the stance that post-structuralists take:

The implication of all this is that language is a much less stable affair than the classical structuralists had considered. Instead of being a well-defined, clearly demarcated structure [...] it now begins to look much more like a sprawling limitless web where there is a constant interchange and circulation of elements, where none of the elements

is absolutely definable and where everything is caught up and traced through by everything else. (1996, pp. 112)

This lack of definition and instability allows us to consider the possibility that when we fail to communicate with each other, as mentioned earlier, it could be possible that this is not entirely our fault. There is an inherent problem with language, wherein it evades our grasp and fails to convey our true meaning. In *Deconstruction, theory and practice* (2002), Christopher Norris asks: ‘How can a language be at once the most ‘rigorous’ and the most ‘unreliable’ source of knowledge?’ (Norris, 2002, pp. xi). Deconstructionist theories, as proposed by Jacques Derrida, suspend ‘[...] all that we take for granted about language, experience and the ‘normal’ possibilities of human communication’ (xii). Norris further elaborates upon how the most important thing to understand about deconstruction is that there is no language ‘[...] so vigilant or self-aware that it can effectively escape the conditions placed upon thought by its own prehistory’ (2002, pp. 21-22).

One of Derrida’s most important ideas is *différance*, which is the ‘idea, that meaning is always deferred’ (2002, pp. 32). Through this condensed look at some of the critical theories of language and linguistics, we can infer that it is a process that is unreliable, and the miscommunication that comes at its hands is unavoidable. It is due to this conclusion that we wonder if Howard is at fault for his unfortunate mishaps in communication. He is working with a form that is doing him no favours – language, spoken and written, warps and distorts meaning. It either makes us flounder, or it makes us seem impassive. This is something that *On Beauty* explores in great detail. We see a roster of vivid characters going about their lives in a fictional university town outside of Boston: the Belseys, consisting of Howard and Kiki, and their children, Jerome, Zora and Levi; the Kippses, presided over by their patriarchal, conservative Christian head Montague (Monty), his wife Carlene, and their children Michael and Victoria; and various members of faculty at Wellington University that contribute to the personal lives of these two families. These interpersonal relationships are sustained or dismantled by how they communicate with each other.

Howard’s troubles begin at this very juncture – as a feared professor of art history, he has cultivated an aura of impenetrability. His need to be inaccessible to his students is evident. When we consider the roles that teachers and professors play in the lives of children and young adults, it becomes especially troubling to see the hostility and lack of empathy that Howard possesses when it comes to connecting with his students. He scans and describes the incoming freshmen to his course on Rembrandt in an offhand and spectacularly politically incorrect way: ‘big nose, small ears, obese, on crutches, hair red as rust, wheelchair, six foot five, short skirt,

pointy breasts...' (Smith, 2006, pp. 154). This act of cool, detached professor follows him home, and he finds himself unable to switch from his academic register to a personal one, more suited to the home turf. It is this inability that causes Howard and Kiki to frequently clash over the fact that his academic training has turned him rigid and unable to communicate with warmth. In the following section, we will explore their relationship and the toll that the academic language Howard refuses to lay down takes on them.

This brings me to the next part: academic language and the academy. *On Beauty* explores how the characters use two different versions of the same language to interact with each other - one that is academic, and one that is distinctly 'personal'. The academic and the various 'others' in this novel are delineated by their differing uses of language. Academic language escapes the confines of the university and makes its way into the homes of all of these characters, straining and mutating their relationships with each other. What is it about academic language that exerts this alienating effect on those not part of the ivory tower? Further, why does the ivory tower demand and accept only such a language – one that is full of jargon and incomprehensible to those outside the academy (and sometimes, also to those within it)? To understand this, we must look at the nature of the University. As one of the structures of modern civilization that (supposedly) embodies enlightenment, knowledge, and humanistic values, the university is 'widely regarded as an authority and influence in a much larger sphere' (Rossen, 1993, pp. 2). Obtaining a university education is considered a privilege and something to aspire towards, as it will comfortably place you within the upper echelons of society.

However, despite these quaint pastoral vignettes, the university is acknowledged to consist of an elite community, one that 'defines itself in part by excluding others' (Rossen 4). Exclusion is the first in the list of problems that the university has now embodied: '[...] marginalization, ... class-consciousness, misogyny, competition, and xenophobia. And sex' (Dalton-Brown, 2008, pp. 595). All of these complaints are valid, and paint us a realistic portrait of the shortcomings of the academy. Amongst these, undoubtedly, is the language that the university prompts both faculty and students to employ. In a problem that seems to be particular to the humanities division, we see this masquerading of intellect as social currency within the university – a skill to be desired as well as envied. In his essay 'Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers', Roland Barthes proposes two kinds of teachers: the Authority who 'speaks well [...] without hesitation, at the right speed, clearly (which is what is demanded of good pedagogic speech: clarity, authority)' and the imperfect orator, who 'moves into the infinitude of language' by 'correcting, adding, wavering' (Barthes, 1993, pp. 192). These mistakes on the part of the speaker are perceived as 'signs of weakness' and render the speaker as 'human, too

human'. These imperfect orators aim to appear 'less disagreeable' in a role that 'makes every speaker a kind of policeman' (1993, pp. 192). This policeman figure is exactly what Howard has become, and we can speculate over the fact that this may be his attempt to save face – donning the mask of the Authority who speaks well in all interpersonal contexts. Outside of the academy, he cannot let go of his vocation. Sally Dalton-Brown clarifies why this might be:

Just so must the academic struggle on campus and outside, unsure of his role in a world in which he is no longer the cloistered scholar, or a figure in the ivory tower of academe, but is rather a deeply troubled member of a contemporary cultural landscape permeated by an equally ambiguous attitude toward the role, and status of, the life of the mind in an increasingly reified world. (2008, pp. 592)

Howard's problems, we suppose, begin exactly due to this lack of sense of self outside the university. He carries his academic persona into the outside world, and suffers because of it. His ensuing alienation from his wife, children, research and students can be attributed to this displacement that occurs once he exits the classroom. Paulo Freire posits that teachers consider themselves 'inside' the realm of society whereas everyone else – students and family – are 'outsiders' (Freire, 2018, pp. 47). This is why teachers and professors do not believe that they need to communicate in a way that makes themselves understood. As supposed intellectuals, they are right in talking and communicating in the way that they do because this is affirmed by the university and by other educators. The language of jargon that spins around in circles misses the entire point of effective communication, which Freire points out is the most important thing: 'only through communication can human life hold meaning' (2018, pp. 50).

Due to this constant use of academic language, Howard alienates himself from everyone around him, and also from himself. Alienation as a concept was introduced to our popular cultural consciousness by Karl Marx in his seminal work, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In this text, he proposes the idea of alienation in the context of the labourers and factory owners – where it would be defined as a 'sense of exclusion and separation.' Benjamin Fryer highlights how alienation '[...] became a frequent buzzword employed by the U.S. media, and the source of renewed interest in the social science research' post World War II (Frymer, 2005, pp. 1). He further explains how the Hegelian-Marxist tradition has strived to understand alienation '[...] in terms of the numerous forms of separation that prevent a subject from realizing his or her historically conditioned humanity' (2005, pp. 1).

We can clearly trace this estrangement from humanity in Howard's ice-cold treatment of those around him. Freire introduces to us the idea of a 'full subject' – 'an intellectual who continuously "reads the world" as she or he simultaneously reads the word' (Frymer, 2005, pp.

2). Hence, according to Freire, alienation occurs when a person loses sight of how to be a human participant in the world. Howard Belsey, as we know, has lost this world-view completely. We can further theorise this alienation in the context of *On Beauty* by thinking about the fact that academics are losing ‘ownership... and control of the process and product of instruction’ (Robinson, 2015, pp. 18) because of the pressures universities are facing as they become more ‘diversified, expanded, globalised, internationalised, borderless/ edgeless, marketised, technologised, and neo-liberalised’ (2015, pp. 17).

Universities as sites of exclusion and alienation have bred alienated and alienating professors and students. In this way, we have traced the fallibility of language, the strains of academic language, and the reason that it only serves as an alienating force for those who use it. The next section will introduce Howard Belsey in greater detail, and we will go from macro-theories to micro-instances from the novel to understand just how deeply these fundamental problems in language manifests itself as chaos in the lives of those in Wellington.

Section Three: *Howard’s (Imminent) End*

“Is that what it’s like, wondered Kiki, to be an intellectual?
Can the tuned mind tune everything else out?”
— Zadie Smith, *On Beauty*, p. 89

Howard has a wide list of identity markers: he is a 56-year-old white, English male from working-class origins; an Oxonian Rembrandt scholar and professor of art history at a small but prestigious university called Wellington. Howard describes himself as ‘[...] a human being himself over the hill, in a bad jacket, with eighties hair, who was under-published, politically marginal’ (Smith, 2006, pp. 142). *On Beauty* begins by introducing us quite overwhelmingly with Howard’s anger: his son Jerome has flown out to London to intern with Howard’s academic rival and general arch-nemesis Monty Kipps. Not only that, he is now living with the Kippses and has supposedly fallen in love with the youngest Kipps child, Victoria, and intends to marry her. Instead of viewing these as the actions of an attention-seeking 20-year-old, Howard embarks on a trans-Atlantic quest to put an end to this relationship before he finds himself related to his biggest enemy by marriage.

Through this dramatic and revealing introduction, we understand that Howard does not share the maturity of his wife Kiki when it comes to dealing with matters of professional enmity as well as their children. This is disconcerting, however, as in all other matters that warrant such a profound display of passion, such as his marriage falling apart due to him engaging in

an extra-marital affair, Howard is subdued, calculated and calm. It leads us to wonder: what is it about the academic world and its insulated relations that causes Howard to react and behave in the way that he does within the ivory tower?

In the classroom, Dr. Howard Belsey once again dons the air of the wise and sage guru, multiple steps above his students in status, intellect and experience. Whereas some professors would strive to bridge that gap, Howard revels in it: ‘When he first began teaching he had tried, stupidly, to coax them out of this fear – now he positively relished it. The fear was respect, the respect, fear. If you didn’t have the fear, you had nothing’ (Smith, 2006, pp. 155).

In a central scene from the second half of the novel, we get introduced to one of Howard’s freshmen year students, enrolled in the class he is teaching that semester. Katie Armstrong is an idealistic 16-year-old at Wellington on a full-scholarship ride, which points to her academic merit. She is full of hope and excitement to be a part of the revered ivory tower, however, ‘one class above all terrifies her’ – Seventeenth Century Art, led by Howard Belsey. After just three classes, she loses her optimism and confidence, where she ‘did not understand much’. An important insight from Katie brings us directly to the question of this research: ‘A lot of the time she felt the professor to be speaking a different language from the one she has spent sixteen years refining’ (2006, pp. 250). Katie feels an overwhelming surge of despondency at her supposed inadequacy, and spends her time crying and cursing ‘her stupidity and her youth’. And in a subsequent example, we see that Katie is not exaggerating this thought. Howard poses questions around liminality, the ‘mytheme of the artist’ and the ‘quasi-mythical notion of genius’ (2006, pp. 252) – in other words, he complicates already complicated concepts by dressing them up in inaccessible academic jargon, in order to promote the fear that he covets, as discussed earlier.

This ‘different language’ that Howard uses makes Katie feel less like a part of the class and more like a fly on the wall, despite having spent a week poring over the homework assignment Howard had assigned. While observing the assigned paintings, Katie makes astute and emotional observations, trying to connect with the pictures at hand while also being critical and analytical. One of the paintings moves her to observe how the battle depicted was almost for ‘[...] a man’s earthly soul, for his human *faith* in the world’ (2006, pp. 250-251). This battle is not something she can bring up in class, and we do not have to spend too much time wondering why. In a subtle parallel, Kiki Belsey is seen accusing Howard of the same lack of belief and faith, later in the novel: ‘You know, Howard, all you ever do is rip into everybody else. You don’t have any beliefs – that’s why you’re scared of people with beliefs, people who have dedicated themselves to something, to an idea’ (2006, pp. 392). Through this accusation

we uncover yet another reason as to why Howard potentially hides behind his academic language and employs it as a distancing tool. Theory and jargon protect academics from truly expressing themselves using words of passion, which is something the university has always taught them to look down upon.

Katie is an excellent example of someone who has been initiated into the groves of the academy but still remains, due to her age and background (growing up in the American Midwest), slightly an outsider. Her conception of a class on art history, before she entered one, hinged on the fact that ‘other intelligent people’ attending would share a common *love* of the artist, and would not be ashamed to ‘express that love’ (Smith, 2006, pp. 250). Regrettably, whether or not this love existed in the professor and the other students, everyone seemed to be besotted with winning a who-knows-bigger-words competition. When Howard poses a question about what the images being discussed in class are truly concerned with, before Katie gets a chance to answer, Zora Belsey pitches in: ‘But you’ve already privileged the term ... You’re already assuming the etching is merely “debased painting”’. So there’s your problematic, right there’ (2006, pp. 253). The class, once again taking this alienating turn, ‘escapes’ Katie – ‘it streams through her toes as the sea and sand when she stands at the edge of the ocean’ (2006, pp. 253). Alexander Dick and Christina Lupton note that Howard’s ‘fraught persona’ is an insightful caricature of the ‘antipathy of academic liberals’, and Howard comes to realize that ‘responsibility and obligation that individuals should feel towards each other’ cannot flourish within the hallowed halls of the university (Dick and Lupton, 2013, pp. 116). Furthermore, they point out that the ‘affection people ... have for each other ... emerges in spaces and moments of ecstatic fissure in the university’s bureaucratic edifice’ (2013, pp. 116).

However, even outside the university, Howard struggles with affection and human connection. Some part of his academic identity has fractured his ability to talk to anyone in a way that means anything, as his wife Kiki is fond of pointing out. We move now into the realm of his family, and the alienation they experience at his behest. Howard and Kiki are experiencing marital problems because Howard slept with a colleague at work, a fact that he initially lied about before the truth revealed itself to Kiki at their 30th anniversary party. Even when Howard makes an effort to make amends, his academic register gets in the way, which is something Kiki refuses to excuse any longer:

the onus is on me, I know that. It’s for me to – to – explain my narrative in a way that’s comprehensible . . . and achieves an . . . I don’t know, explanation, I suppose, in terms of motivation . . .’

‘Don’t worry – I comprehend your narrative, Howard. Otherwise known as, I got your number. *We’re not in your class now*. Are you able to talk to me in a way that means *anything?*’ (2006, pp. 204)

This is just one amongst many outbreaks where Kiki finds herself bemoaning Howard’s academic language in front of her personal one (Smith, 2006, pp. 204-205). In another cataclysmic fight, Kiki accuses Howard of being the ‘thought police’ – ‘[...] we can’t talk about anything seriously, everything’s ironic, nothing’s serious – everyone’s scared to *speak* in case *you* think it’s cliché’d or dull [...] And you don’t care about anything, you don’t care about *us*’ (2006, pp. 393). The cat is out of the bag at the end of this one-sided screaming match. The power imbalance is at work on two levels here: firstly, the enraged woman versus the collected, level headed male, and secondly, in the same composed vein, the erudite scholar versus the ‘Other’ – an Other, in this case, who symbolizes two of the more marginalized groups that are constantly left out of the ivory tower: a black woman. Kiki used to feel lucky to have found her footing in a place filled to the brim with academics (2006, pp. 54), but now when she looks at Howard, she feels embarrassed. We can see this when she chastises Howard for sharing an email about Baudrillard and simulated wars after the devastating 9/11 incident:

‘[...] And I was thinking: *What is wrong with this man?* I was *ashamed* of you. I didn’t say anything, but I was. Howard,’ she said, reaching out to him but not far enough to touch, ‘this is *real*. This life. We’re really here – this is really happening. Suffering is *real*. When you hurt people, it’s *real*. When you fuck one of our best friends, that’s a *real* thing and it *hurts* me.’ (2006, pp. 394)

The repeated use of the word ‘real’ in the passage above confronts us with the age-old problem that academics in the humanities face: that their work is not substantial or tangible enough to matter – which, if said to any academic, is sure to shake the very foundation of their core beliefs. Perhaps, we are pushed to wonder, this is another reason why Howard stays hidden behind the veil of academic language, because ‘[...] academics are still “trying to negotiate some workable relationship with the outside world”’ (Dalton-Brown, 2008, pp. 598). Further, when Kiki says, ‘this is real. This life’, it also insinuates that Howard’s academic life is not real, or less real, when compared with someone like her, who works in the hospital and sees pretty gruesome sights every day. Here is another example of the sheltered and insulated nature of the university. In teaching students and encouraging professors to think ‘critically’, the academy forgets to train them in the arts of empathy. This is grating for someone as warm, connected and emotional as Kiki. Howard, residing within the academy, is far removed from the harsh realities of the world and that is the only way in which he can in all seriousness share academic articles after an event of global impact. Professors, as people that grew up and got an

education within the one or the other institutional structure, have in a sense remained sheltered and protected by this formidable parent all their life.

At this juncture, we return to the question of where Howard's aforementioned need for respect and fear stems from, and why it is so all-consuming that it follows him out of the classroom and into his living room. Howard began life as a butcher's son in an ugly part of London, where every 'banal little English catchphrase' grated against his more aesthetically fine-tuned sensibilities – he regarded this as 'meaningless noise' which was a poor substitute for 'real conversation' (Smith, 2006, pp. 297). In a revealing passage, when he visits his father and childhood home after four years, he recounts how '[t]his was what he had been running from when he escaped to Oxford and every year since Oxford. Half-lived life. The unexamined life is not worth living' (pp. 297). Through his own words, we see the importance of the university to Howard, and all that it represents to him. He went to university against his father's advice (pp. 295), and we now see how the university can 'act as a vastly powerful surrogate parent figure' (Rossen, 1993, pp. 11).

Young Howard resembles a similar escapist protagonist from Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1991), a campus novel revolving around Richard Pape, and his struggle to fit in with the elite students at his university. Richard exalted the life of the mind and the space of the university campus both. He moved away to a Wellingtonian-esque small, liberal arts college in Vermont, in an attempt to escape his working-class origins and transition from the glitz of the West to the more erudite East Coast. His major contentions lie with his father, as well. Both Richard and Howard's fathers would have liked them to stay where they were born – in a sense, stay true to their roots – and neither of them could imagine a worse fate, never having gone anywhere or accomplished anything. However, this sense of class betrayal lingers on, and we see Howard thinking about where he has come from with fondness when he is now so far removed from that life: 'Howard was able... to feel himself, in his own romantic fashion, to be one of them. It was an ancestry he referred to proudly at Marxist conferences and in print [...] For the most part, however, Howard liked to keep his 'working-class roots' where they flourished best: in his imagination' (2006, pp. 292). We see how Howard uses his class background to his advantage at academic conferences and as a way to diversify and minoritize himself within an evolving university structure that emphasizes these very categories. We have now explored why it means so much for Howard to hold on to his academic identity, and how this leads him to keep that mask on and talk to everyone in his life with indifferent detachment.

Through the last couple of examples, both within the classroom and outside of it, we have seen how Howard has managed to sever all hopes of establishing meaningful connections

with the people around him. It is a sad image of a man world weary, alone and inevitably alienated. In this solitude, the university manages to find something affirming in this hermit-like mentality of a man surrounded by the written word with no need for anyone or anything else. However, it is Zadie Smith's genius that builds up this perception in our heads but also lets it come crashing down the minute we think we have identified someone for who they truly are. She does an excellent job of pointing out the nuances of human character – their flaws, shortcomings, despair – but also their love, their beauty and their need to connect (an echo of Smith's literary hero, E. M. Forster's motto – 'only connect').

The end of the novel follows a separated Howard and Kiki into one of the last and most important academic presentations of Howard's life. He arrives disgruntled, disheveled and so far removed from the image of the Authority proposed by Barthes in the previous chapter that it is almost comical. However, it seems to be precisely this display of humanity and of a capacity to err professionally that makes Howard endearing to Kiki again. She sees him for who he is – indeed, who he was – the minute his academic mask slips off. The novel ends on an optimistic note, with tender smiles and looks exchanged by the battle worn couple. It serves as a reminder to us that in pursuit of higher, academic ideals, we cannot displace the humanity within us. In order to win a debate, we cannot create an effect that alienates us from those closest to us. Not only does it adversely impact the Others, it also adversely affects the academic. However, all of this occurs due to a host of social and environmental influences, and the nature of academia as alienating, elitist and isolating, which breeds an army of students and professors who behave in much the same way, like a child copying a parent in all of their actions, good or bad.

Section 4: *Conclusion*

Is our Georgian literature a patch on the Elizabethan? Where then are we to lay the blame? Not on our professors; not on our reviewers; not on our writers; but on words... They are the wildest, freest, most irresponsible, most unteachable of all things... words do not live in dictionaries; they live in the mind. If you want proof of this, consider how often in moments of emotion when we most need words we find none.

— Virginia Woolf, *On Craftsmanship*, 1937

We have explored why Howard uses academic language constantly, and how this impacts his relationships with the 'others' around him. Language is a fickle master, we have seen how there is no winning in this game, if indeed it can be termed one. However, it seems

that Howard's end should be looked at as a cautionary tale. As individuals within different parts of the academic labour structure, we are not immune to the allure of its language. It exalts us, makes us seem more erudite, and sets us apart from everyone else. It is easy to get caught up in this saccharine trap. We have to critically consider the long and convoluted politics of the university structure and its history as a site of exclusion.

Language has been used as a weapon to oppress different groups in the past and continues to exert the same alienating effect today. Minorities within the structure have to petition to be heard, not just in academic language, but in whatever manner they chose to speak. Black people get taken less seriously because their manner of speech is not a stern, romanticized, Anglican baritone; Asian minorities are similarly dismissed on the grounds of not knowing English well enough (we see this even in the continuing insistence of international students having to give English-language proficiency examinations to gain admission into universities in the West). These institutional rules are used to remind those conventionally excluded from the university that they don't and can never fully belong to the university.

We see this in *On Beauty*, as well, where Smith contrasts Howard, a white man of unbelievable privilege against his Black wife, students, and colleagues. One such character, a street poet named Carl, maintained throughout the first half of the novel that a university education was not for him, and not all that it was cracked up to be – 'That's college, right? That's what you paying all that money for – just so you get to talk to other people about that shit' (Smith, 2006, pp. 137). However, he later gets offered a job archiving and cataloguing music in the university library, and his stance shifts. After being an outsider to an institution he believed he would never get access to, he is finally in – and his delight is in the fact that he is getting paid for his knowledge of hip-hop music. Slowly, the Carl we knew in the former half of the tale dissolves, becomes yet another Black man lost amongst the university structure – servile, humbled and awed by the place into which he has been so graciously taken in.

This is why the examination of campus and academic fictions continues to hold my attention – it highlights more or less accurately the feelings of isolation, exclusion, of being an imposter within at all levels of the academy in our contemporary times. What would seem obvious to the layman – that anyone with enough merit and ability should be admitted into the university – is not in fact common practice. You may well get admitted into its enclaves, however, navigating it proves to be a difficult practice. You have to say the right things, use the right words, know and consort with the right academic circles, have popularity amongst students and colleagues, battle to earn tenure amongst the increasing trend of adjunctification in these neoliberal times.

It is important to continue to question what a university education truly entails. We must continue to try and make language and education accessible on a more macro level and resist the traditions of the West that would be happy to continue in the way that things are. If we do not, if we give in to the rules of the academy, then the joy and rapture and the experience of beauty, something Zadie Smith is trying to address in her work as well, will be lost in the bureaucratic red tape and institutional, neoliberal edifices of the university. As Carlene Kipps mentions in a conversation with Kiki Belsey, ‘*There is such a shelter in each other*’ (2006, pp. 93). This shelter, found in communal activities, away from the critical and analytical lens (once in a while), is what we must strive to maintain.

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LETTING GO OF THE APRON STRINGS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCE IN YOUNG ADULTS

Dhvani Menon¹

Abstract

While setting out into the real world on their own, university students tend to struggle to get acclimatised to their environment. They may feel overwhelmed and may feel the need to rely on their families. In contrast, young adults living with their parents still feel secure; they can rely on them. Additionally, a few contradictions are observed in the existing literature on this subject. This research study aims to understand how the emotional dependence of an individual may be influenced by their living arrangements. This study used Lemos and Londoño's Emotional Dependence Scale (2006) and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (1995). From a simple statistical analysis, it was observed that young adults living away from their families were less likely to be emotionally dependent on their families and more likely to have a higher level of psychological well-being than those living with their families.

Key terms: emotional dependency, psychological well-being, autonomy

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that the number of young adults choosing to live with their parents is gradually increasing. For example, in the United States, 46-47% of the youth population (18-Twenty-nine years) have been reported living at home with family as of 2019. However, it is the complete opposite in India, where individuals prefer to live on their own (More than 750,000 Indian students, 2019). It was reported that over 750,000 Indian university students went abroad to study as of 2018.

The most significant advantage of living by oneself is that individuals have their personal space, a luxury that individuals living with family do not have. They can develop a sense of

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independence, which develops functional skills that could be of use at several times in life. However, there may be a lack of support in times of need. Living with family while providing necessary emotional support could also result in the individual becoming too comfortable and emotionally dependent on others. On the other hand, living by oneself creates a demand for self-agency and emotional independence.

Erik Erikson, in his proposal of the psycho-social development of personality, proposed the theory of Psycho-social development, which talks about the impact of social experiences on the overall development of a person. Erikson believes that if people manage to conquer the conflict they face in each stage of their lives, their psychological well-being will increase (Orenstein & Lewis, 2020). However, according to this theory, if they do not deal with the conflict properly, they may not gain the skills required to build a strong sense of self.

The period of adolescence, i.e., 12-18 years, is crucial since adolescents explore their identity and develop their sense of self. If they are unable to do so, they will remain unsure of themselves, which could hamper their identity development. The period of young adulthood, i.e., 19-40 years, is when individuals look to form intimate relationships with each other, which can only be done if one has a fully developed sense of self. Hence, it can be assumed that the need for intimate relationships is essential for developing an individual's sense of self in this life stage.

Rationale of this Study

The average university student is still trying to find their footing while venturing independently into the world. This may leave them feeling daunted and needing emotional support to rely on their family or loved ones. On the other hand, young adults still living with their families still have that sense of security that they can fall back on. Thus, this study aims to measure the emotional dependence of young adults and how it varies depending on their living conditions.

This study will also help understand the extent to which their living conditions affect their psychological well-being since this is fairly relevant in the present day, with the number of students wanting to live on their own increasing. Additionally, since there is not much supporting literature that can give us an idea of the same, this study could provide information or at least lay the groundwork for that area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maintaining your psychological well-being is difficult, especially if you have just started living in a completely new place. It has been observed that many university students worldwide go out of their comfort zones by choosing to take residence in a different city or country even to pursue their education. On the other hand, some individuals choose to stay with their families, most probably to have a more stable support system while they are trying to get their lives on track. It can be speculated that an individual's living conditions could affect their psychological well-being and their self-esteem in different possible ways. In this section, I have reviewed empirical data on the study variables that pertain to the research question of this study.

Psychological Well-being and Family Dynamics

A study was conducted among young adults to gauge if living conditions and self-esteem have any correlation to an individual's psychological well-being. It was observed that young female adults, who lived away from home, experienced a higher level of psychological well-being than their male counterparts (Bhatt & Kumar, n.d.). There was also a positive correlation between self-esteem and psychological well-being. Holliman et al. (2021) conducted a study in the United Kingdom, where university students in the age group of 19-38 years were selected to test their overall adaptability skills, social support, life satisfaction, overall psychological well-being and any potential psychological distress. It was found that the students' adaptability was related to psychological distress rather than social support. In other words, students were more likely to develop solutions to adapt to situations instead of relying on others. This could be because they were university students, and individuals at that age were expected to have an established level of autonomy and independence since they live away from their support group.

Studies have also shown that social support is extremely important for university students and is essential for their mental health. For example, university students with more social support are more likely to have a better quality of life and lower chances of getting depressive symptoms (Alsubaie et al., 2019). A better quality of life results in better psychological well-being, which could, in turn, result in a higher level of mental toughness (Stamp et al., 2015). The level of happiness of an average university student depends on the social support they receive from family (Schnettler et al., 2015). International students are at risk of losing contact with loved ones once they move, so the chances of facing psychological distress could be high due to a lack of social support. In order to prevent this, they must try to maintain contact with

their family while simultaneously building connections with their peers from their campus or nearby areas (Lashari et al., 2018).

Emotional Dependency and Addiction

Man is a social animal. It is an evolutionary survival tactic to feel the need to socialise with other human beings. Through this, people create strong connections with one another, which, in turn, affects their emotional and personality development. People who have a healthy amount of dependency on others have a strong sense of self and trust others. There are, however, instances where people may be overly dependent on others due to a lack of adequate relationships. At times, engaging in risky behaviours can result in group identity formation, especially since individuals continue to explore their identities and roles (Arnett, 2000).

Estévez et al. (2017) conducted a study in Madrid to gauge the level of various behavioural addictions such as mobile abuse. The participants were between 18 and 31 years of age. The results showed that adolescents and young adults showed a positive correlation between substance abuse, low esteem, and their need to please others. The authors speculated that people who have problems with face-to-face social relationships rely on the Internet to create connections with others, creating an ideal world. This is probably because the Internet gives individuals the freedom to represent themselves in whichever way they wish to. People suffering from self-esteem generally dedicate more time to make up for their other shortcomings and real-life difficulties. In yet another study, it was found that individuals suffering from attachment insecurity and anxiety were found to indulge in substance abuse.

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem

Emotional intelligence is often understood as understanding individual conflicts and emotions and building healthy relationships with other human beings. Praditsang et al. (2015) specifically emphasised personal and social competence in their study. Personal competence can be further divided into three categories – self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation.

Self-awareness, which can be divided into three more categories (emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence), basically refers to recognising one's emotions and the effects of the same. Self-regulation, which includes self-control, trustworthiness, consciousness, adaptability and innovation, determines how well one can manage their internal emotional states and impulses. Motivation refers to tendencies influenced by emotion that help individuals achieve their goals.

On the other hand, social competence deals with managing their relationship. This dimension can be divided into two categories – empathy and social skills. Empathy refers to an individual's ability to perceive and understand another individual's feelings and other concerns. On the other hand, social skills refer to an individual's ability to persuade, communicate their thoughts, negotiate with others, and build relationships with others.

Praditsang et al. (2015) conducted another study in Thailand to measure the emotional intelligence of first-year university students and how this is affected by various factors such as demographic factors. The results showed that the university students who participated in the test have a relatively high emotional intelligence. The authors thought it could be because these students were happy as they moved out of their homes and away from school. They thought of themselves as adults as they started living on their own. Because these students were able to make new friends and received support from senior students in addition to experiencing more freedom in speech and expression and less control, rules and regulations, these students have a relatively high emotional intelligence.

Another study was conducted in Australia by Mergler et al. (2007) to see how emotional intelligence relates to self-esteem and personal responsibility. However, this study administered the results on adolescents (15-18 years) and university students (17-48 years). It was observed that while both groups had relatively normal levels of emotional intelligence, university students had higher levels of self-esteem than adolescents. This is probably because adolescents usually experience different changes in their lives at this time, such as graduation and moving out, job hunting, etc. They may feel the pressure, leading to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty.

On the other hand, university students have more or less settled down and know how to act. Mergler et al. (2007)s had found a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and self-esteem in other works and prior research. However, nothing of the sort was observed here. On the flip side, there are multiple limitations to this particular study. This test was administered to only a specific group of people (i.e., white middle-class individuals). As such, the findings of this study cannot be generalized for the entire population. This study was also conducted a considerable amount of time back and is relatively dated. However, this study has laid the foundation for future research conducted along the same lines.

Gaps in the literature review

While there have been studies that examine different aspects of emotional dependence, such as lack of self-esteem, there do not seem to be any talk specifically about young adults being emotionally dependent on family members. There have been research papers that talk about emotional dependence in romantic relationships. However, that aspect is quite irrelevant to this study. Instead of emotional dependence, in particular, a fair bit of literature talks about the correlation between psychological well-being and an individual's living conditions. There also are not many studies that focus specifically on Indian students. Thus, it is hard to understand how this can be related to the Indian context. Another interesting point observed is how Alsubaie et al. (2019) talk about the importance of forming bonds with other individuals, while the other research papers highlight the significance of having social support in the form of family.

METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to understand how living conditions (i.e., whether they live with their families, on their own, etc.) affect the emotional dependence in an individual. In order to achieve this research objective, this paper tries to answer the question- is emotional dependence or independence of young adults (18-22 years) influenced by them living with or away from family?

The objective behind undertaking this research is to see if young adults who live with their families are more emotionally dependent on them than those who live away from their families. Additionally, this study also attempted to discern any effects on psychological well-being caused by their living conditions, i.e., whether they live independently or with their families.

The sample population of this group was males, females and others belonging to the age group of 18-22 years. [N=50] The sample population was further divided into two groups – Category 1: Living with Family [N=30] and Category 2: Living Away from Family [N=20]. The samples collected from this group were living away from their families prior to the pandemic.

The questionnaire for this study was designed using Lemos and Londoño's Emotional Dependence Scale (2006) and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (1995).

The data for this research study was collected through Primary Data Collection using the survey method. The survey was conducted by circulating the questionnaire through Google Forms.

Ethical Considerations

The participants of this study were aware of the purpose of this research. They gave their consent for their voluntary participation in this study. Their anonymity was maintained, and their responses were kept confidential throughout this research study. No harm of any sort was done to the participants. Additionally, only the components relevant to the study, i.e. Emotional Dependence and Psychological Well-being, were assessed. Additionally, permission to modify and use Lemos and Londoño's Emotional Dependence Scale to fit the context of this study was taken.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Table 4.1 shows the Descriptive Statistics of Category 1: participants living with families (N=30)

	E.D.	P.W.B.	Autonomy	Env. Mastery	Personal Growth	P.R. Others	Purpose in Life	Self- Acceptance
Mean	60.17	86.03	14.87	12.2	17.5	12.53	15.2	13.73
S.D.	14.21	14.22	2.99	2.63	3.07	4.22	4.25	3.51

Table 4.1 shows the mean and standard deviation of emotional dependence, psychological well-being, and the PWB scale facets. The mean score of emotional dependence (60.17) indicated a moderate level of emotional dependence. The mean score for psychological well-being is 86.03, indicating a moderately high psychological well-being level. The mean scores of personal growth (17.5) and purpose in life (15.2) are quite high, while the rest of the scores are moderate.

Table 4.2 shows the Descriptive Statistics of Category 2: participants living away from their families (N=20)

	E.D.	P.W.B.	Autonomy	Env. Mastery	Personal Growth	P.R. Others	Purpose in Life	Self- Acceptance
Mean	53.1	90.1	14.9	13.5	18	13.55	14.8	15.35
S.D.	17.78	15.56	4.14	3.07	2.96	4.21	3.09	3.47

Table 4.2 shows the mean and standard deviation of emotional dependence, psychological well-being, and the PWB scale facets. The mean score of emotional dependence (53.1) indicates a considerably lower level of emotional dependence than category 1. The mean score of psychological well-being (90.1) indicates a moderately higher level of psychological well-being than Category 1. The mean score of purpose in life is lower than the mean score observed in category 1. In contrast, the other mean scores are higher, except for autonomy, where there is an insignificant difference between the mean scores received in Category 1 and Category 2.

Correlation between the variables

Table 4.3 shows the correlation between Emotional Dependency and Psychological Well-being and the factors obtained from participants living with their families. (N=30)

	EDQ	PWB	Autonomy	Env Mastery	Personal Growth	P.R. Others	Purpose in Life	Self- Acceptance
EDQ	1							
PWB	-0.17	1						

Autonomy	0.16	0.28	1						
Env Mastery	-0.07	0.76	0.26	1					
Personal Growth	-0.13	0.80	-0.02	0.70	1				
PR Others	-0.10	0.81	0.22	0.55	0.56	1			
Purpose in Life	-0.28	0.68	-0.12	0.32	0.61	0.32	1		
Self-Acceptance	-0.19	0.75	-0.02	0.46	0.44	0.61	0.47	1	

Table 4.3 shows us that Emotional Dependency is positively correlated with autonomy ($r(30) = 0.16$) and that there is a weak correlation between the two variables. Apart from that, a weak negative correlation between Emotional Dependency and the rest of the variables were observed.

Table 4.4 shows the correlation between Emotional Dependency and Psychological Well-being as well as the factors obtained from participants living away from their families. (N=20)

	ED	PWB	Autonomy	Env Mastery	Personal Growth	PR Others	Purpose in Life	Self-Acceptance
ED	1							
PWB	-0.57	1						
Autonomy	-0.60	0.89	1					

Env Mastery	-0.49	0.81	0.76	1				
Personal Growth	-0.40	0.81	0.61	0.54	1			
PR Others	-0.19	0.57	0.38	0.43	0.36	1		
Purpose in Life	-0.52	0.53	0.37	0.32	0.58	-0.14	1	
Self-Acceptance	-0.40	0.85	0.81	0.60	0.61	0.33	0.44	1

Table 4.4 shows us that Emotional Dependency is negatively correlated with all the variables, with the correlation between Emotional Dependency and Autonomy ($r(20) = 0.6$) and Psychological Well-being ($r(20) = -0.57$) being moderately strong. The correlation between Emotional Dependency and Purpose in Life ($r(20) = -0.52$) and Environmental Mastery ($r(20) = -0.49$) and Self-acceptance ($r(20) = -0.4$) and Personal Growth is ($r(20) = -0.4$) is moderate. The correlation between Emotional Dependency and Positive Relations with Others ($r(20) = -0.19$) is weak.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that young adults (who took part in this study) living away from their family have a higher level of psychological well-being and are overall in a more positive state of mind than those who live with family. They also have a lower level of emotional dependence on their families than those in Category 1 (living with family). That is not to suggest that the participants in Category 1 are highly emotionally dependent on their families. While lower than that of Category 2 (living away from family), the mean score is moderate and suggests that their level of emotional dependence is moderate.

There was also a moderately strong negative correlation observed between Emotional Dependency and Psychological Well-being in Category 2. Psychological well-being

encompasses Autonomy, Self-acceptance, Purpose in Life and Environmental Mastery, which will be discussed separately.

Autonomy and Emotional Dependency

A moderately strong negative correlation was observed between Emotional Dependency and Autonomy in Category 2. Coupled with the moderately high mean score received in autonomy, this could suggest that young adults living away from home are more able to resist peer pressures and form their own opinions. Cullaty (n.d.) also mentions that it is important to separate them from parents to develop autonomy among college students efficiently. This also ties in with Levinson's theory of adult development, which states that parents must be separated from their children at that age.

Environmental Mastery and Emotional Dependency

A moderate negative correlation was found between Environmental Mastery and Emotional Dependency in Category 2. This, and the moderate mean score obtained in the Environmental Mastery factor, suggests that young adults living away from their families have a high level of adaptability and are able to make use of their immediate surroundings decently, more so than their counterparts in Category 1. Holliman et al. (2021) had conducted a similar study. Having found similar results, they said that it could be because university students tend to have increased independence since they are more likely to live away from home. As such, the social support they receive is bound to be limited. This could result in learning to draw from one's own experiences and resources to deal with situations.

Self-Acceptance, Purpose in Life and Emotional Dependency

A moderately negative correlation was also found between Emotional Dependency and Self-acceptance and Purpose in Life in Category 2. Having a high level of emotional dependence is often considered harmful for an individual's growth and development. Too much dependence on a person or people could result in having low self-esteem and not having their own set of goals and aspirations. Cullaty's statement of separating young adults from their parents also applies here. The key to self-acceptance and developing a purpose in life is often the need to leave the nest.

Contradictory Results

While the results of this study more or less tie in with the literature previously studied, an anomaly was observed. In Category 1, a positive correlation between Emotional Dependency and autonomy was discovered. While the correlation is weak, it suggests that young adults living with their families are likely to experience a positive correlation between Autonomy and Emotional Dependency. This contradicts Cullaty's works that emphasise the importance of separating young adults from their parents. Since no existing literature could explain this particular result, further research will have to be conducted to see if these results can be replicated.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Limitations of this study

Some limitations were faced while conducting this study. First and foremost, the sample size limits the scope of the research study. By collecting data from only 50 participants, it is hard to make generalisations and gauge the level of emotional dependency and psychological well-being of young adults on the whole. Additionally, because the samples collected from participants living alone and living with roommates were individually quite low, both these groups had to be combined. Specific results from these two groups separately could not be gauged. Lack of time also factored into this. The results calculated for this study were also based on the living conditions of the participants before the pandemic. Many of them experienced a change in living conditions because of the pandemic; this change was not accounted for.

Another limitation of this study is with regards to the Emotional Dependency Scale. It was originally developed in Spanish to assess the emotional dependency of people in romantic relationships. Since this project aimed to study the emotional dependency of young adults regarding their family and how it varies depending on their living conditions, a fair number of statements may have appeared odd to the participants. Additionally, since the scale used for this study was a translated version of the same, many nuances were potentially lost, making some of the statements appear bizarre.

Future scope of this study

This study laid the groundwork for assessing emotional dependency in young adults. However, more ground can be covered to get a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. By increasing the sample size, there will be more scope for understanding this topic. The domain of this research project can also be extended to assess an individual's emotional dependence on friends and family and romantic partners. This study did not mainly focus on gender differences (if any). Thus, further studies can be conducted to see if psychological well-being and emotional dependence are exhibited in different manners among individuals of different genders. Additional research on finding the relationship between personality and emotional dependency can also be carried out to understand how personality affects one's self-worth or what kind of personality traits are exhibited among emotionally dependent individuals.

Conclusion

More and more young adults are attempting to gain independence and, as a result, are moving out of their homes for further studies. Living conditions do play a role in an individual's overall psychological well-being and emotional dependence. Levinson's theory correctly states that to gain some sense of autonomy, the young adult must be separated from their parents. This will also ensure that they gain some form of independence and are able to develop their sense of purpose on their own.

Individuals living away from their families reported to be slightly less emotionally dependent on their families and have a slightly higher psychological well-being than those who live with their families. In the same group, it was also observed that there is a moderately strong negative correlation between emotional dependency and psychological well-being, suggesting that emotional dependency could potentially increase with a decrease in psychological well-being. There is also a moderately high negative correlation between autonomy and emotional dependency, which suggests that emotional dependency could counter their sense of independence. Individuals who live away from home also tend to be more adaptable to new situations and can make good use of their surroundings. Further research can be conducted with a larger sample in order to get a more comprehensive idea of how emotional dependency can be affected by one's living conditions. Additionally, the domain of this study could be expanded to include emotional dependency on friends and romantic partners.

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KACHIYA SAN SOJH¹- MAPPING THE MAITHILI LANGUAGE MOVEMENT ²

Abstract

This study will look into the different ways in which the Maithili language movement grew. First, it will understand the cultural and geographical history of the Mithila region where Maithili is spoken. This will be followed by using these learnings to identify how literature was the first step taken towards Maithili movement growth. Then the research will move into recognising how politics and social media have enhanced the sustenance of this movement. The research will conclude with a reflection upon how successful this movement has been.

Keywords: language, population, politics, social media, literature, popular culture

Introduction

Translated literature has gained strong momentum for publication houses that are now translating their bestsellers into regional languages. Not only has this created greater awareness about regional literature and folklore, but it has also given a multitude of reserved and restricted languages a revolution and growth spurt by shifting them to another similarly unknown language and by demanding them to be understood and interpreted. The commonplace phrase 'lost in translation', which condemned the derangement of literature by translation, has now been refurbished to fit the changing times, and the increase in the publication of translated works proves that there is so much that is 'gained in translation'. One of the many languages that became vocal for its rights and that vouched for recognition and autonomy is the Maithili language spoken in parts of Bihar.

The Maithili language movement is growing continuously, parallel to the Bhojpuri language movement. In India's rich and vast linguistic history, Maithili has been perceived as a mere dialect of the predominantly spoken Hindi language, alongside its counterparts of Angika and Vajji. But, Maithili is not just another dialect. It rejects the traditional Devnagri scripture that is followed in Hindi writing. Vidyapati (1352-1448) and Govinda Das (1535-1613) remain some of the first pioneers who asserted the linguistic independence of Maithili and refuted any dialect-oriented theories that came through. Support for Vidyapati emerged with newfound

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²This work is an abridged edition of an independent research project taken over the fourth semester.

evidence for his hypothesis that identified Maithili as a language that was at par with popular languages like Hindi and Bengali.

Maithili comes across as particularly quaint and intriguing because it is socially limited to a group of people and to the region of Mithila, known for its vibrant history that dates back to the later Vedic period and for being a predominant kingdom in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Despite its ups and downs, the ever-lasting lifespan of this language has the potential to draw the interest of aspiring linguists to examine and witness how it has stood the test of time. The richness of the literature written in this language, composed by predominant names such as Jyotirishwar Thakur (1290-1350), Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568), Snehlata (1909-1993), Rajkamal Choudhary (1929-1967), among a variety of pioneers, serves as another crowd-puller.

Within a decade, the Maithili-speaking population sprung up the highest, to 153.5% in Chandigarh itself (Census, 2011). Meanwhile, the Maithili speaking population of India stands at 1,35,83,464, which is approximately 1.21% of the Indian population (Census, 2011). This is, in fact, a significant portion of speakers, which reflects strongly upon how effective the movement has proven in establishing Maithili as a language, and it even implies that the act of recognition has, in fact, prompted people to learn and adapt it as a spoken language. These statistics are an essential part of the movement as we are able to grasp how much the movement has sustained itself.

Why is this study needed?: India is a diverse country in many aspects but is immensely known for its vastly spoken list of languages, which may often be confused with dialects. It is believed that in India, language changes form and shape at every 40 km. This may indicate how many languages are actually hidden in India. This study aims to understand that languages can be retrieved and gain the respect and honour they have always deserved. This will only add to the cultural richness of India.

Literature review

The role of translation has been influential in the growth of a language in the social sphere, how much a translation actually benefits a linguistic community by opening doors for them, and that it is not just a capitaliser for publishing houses (Venkatesh, 2020). The author 'Popular novels have been quickly translated', and literary novels often bear the brunt of this profit-making agenda, which is why many works have not been known and are often lost, leading to a pool of Indian languages going dormant. However, when works are translated to regional

languages, there is a sense of diversity that publishers intend to achieve, so literature becomes appreciated for its literary value. Translation allows 'engagement with both languages' (Venkatesh, 2020), which is a point that clearly stands out as an explanation to why translation across languages is needed- it opens doors to another language, and also marks the presence of two particular languages with great prominence. This is an important step in the act of linguistic movements as it inaugurates the revolution by simply acknowledging and recognising the presence of a language as an independent entity and not as yet another dialect of a more populous language. The Bhojpuri language movement is a 'cultural assertion' that has helped the Bhojpuri-speaking culture speak up for itself against the calls that it is a variant of Hindi (Venkatesh, 2020). Alongside Bhojpuri, some of the languages that have thrived for their hegemony are the languages Awadhi and Maithili (Jha, 2020). Publication and writing held importance in the olden times, favouring Maithili writers to make their mark in the social sphere, 'So for Maithili to print, it established the written literary tradition' (Jha, 2020). When works were written and shared amongst the community, there was representation, there was popularity, and therefore, there was a revolution. With the emergence of audio-visual media, Maithili was able to express it more fully, and languages such as Bhojpuri and Awadhi held their literary heritage in non-written mediums, such as music, dance and theatre, started to vouch for their recognition. 'So, in the Maithili movement, and many of the linguistic movements in North India the question is more about recognition.' (Jha, 2020) There is as little as this that needs to be done for a language to flourish as part of any movement, and this is as evident as it is, for that is the final and only step of the movement. When a language is considered as an independent and veritable entity without any arguments, the movement is indubitably successful. However, there is enough complexity in the process of recognition, for which expression has to help the establishment of the language. As much as writers and poets write and share their work, there will be awareness about the language. language is not as simple as it is perceived, and is indeed a constitutionalised part of any region. The Maithili movement was stimulated by a curiosity that made the thinking towards the movement 'pregnant with deep consequences' (Jha, 1996), suggesting that the Maithili movement was a spark that was ignited by curiosity, and then obviously burst into flames, giving the movement life and success. Politics went into the propagation of the Maithili movement, for it was not simply the role of literature but also the role of sociology and archaeology in helping the Maithili language gain recognition. Sociologically, Maithili crusaders came up with journals, and many of them went a step further by providing exclusivity and favouritism to Maithili writings only (Jha, 1996). Journalism is an integral part of reinforcing a language by giving it

room to thrive because of how widespread it can become, and beyond this, it can also serve as a means of expression, which is also evident in the self-respect movement of Tamil Nadu (Srilata, 2003) where journals helped the adi-Dravidas in standing up against casteism. Archaeology demanded the excavation of Maithili texts and scriptures, which proved much more about how Maithili lost its autonomy to Hindi, which indeed needed to be regained, hence fuelling the movement further.

Rationale: North India has an extremely vast and unlimited culture of languages. A linguistic movement has immense potential to help identify and glorify that very language, almost creating a moment of pride, legacy, and honour amongst the speakers. This study takes a closer look at how literature and the evolution of expression have helped the Maithili movement grow and how media have allowed authors to present their points that would otherwise be neglected.

Methodology: This study is entirely qualitative and done primarily with the text analysis, wherein the works by prominent authors like Vidyapati, Govind Das, Snehlata and many others, as well as publications in Maithili journals that were started as part of the movement, will be looked closely for their significance to the revolution. Beyond this, the role of advancing means of media such as social media as voices of the Maithili autonomy seekers will be looked into further, for how they have helped maintain and preserve the movement through an increasing demand of popular culture over academia and literary cultures. The agenda of this study is to understand why and when the Maithili language movement started, to recognise what the movement offers, to identify and reflect upon how the quest for regional literature has catalysed this movement, and finally, to look at selected writers who shaped the language movement and contributed to modern Maithili literature.

History of Mithila and the Maithili Language Movement

Mithila: Mithila, Videha, Darbhanga, the region once reigned by the most influential of rulers, has many names to it. A curved pike looking leftwards, with an elaborate crest going up to its tail, and a banner on the top that spells the name of the empire in clear, block letters, with one banner below that spells in Sanskrit, the name of Lord Sri Krishna, symbolises one of the empires of this region- Darbhanga.

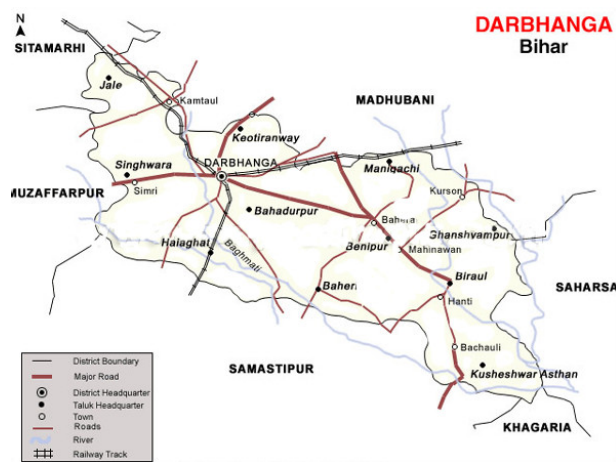


Image 1: *Political Map of Darbhanga district, Bihar, India.* Source: brandbihar.com

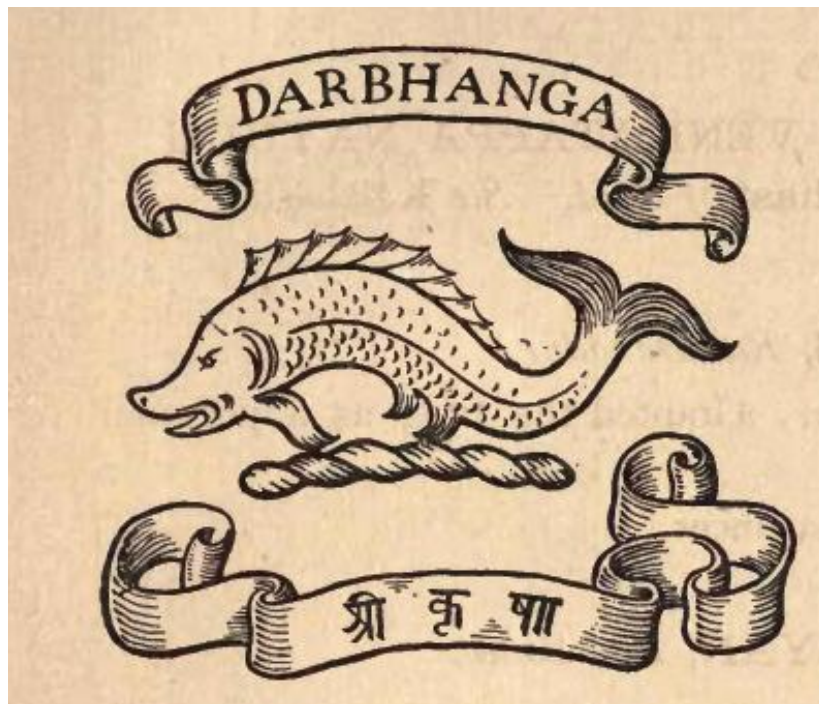


Image 2: *The symbol of the princely state of Darbhanga.* Source: Golden Book of India, 1893

This area with many names is marked by the land between the Himalayas and the holy river Ganga and falls in the regions of southern Nepal and northern Bihar. There have been long-lasting supremacy of the Brahmin caste of Hinduism in the Mithila region. Brahmins had 'monopolised' the society in Mithila (Dewey, 1976), which implies that they were primarily at the helm of both schools as well as office management, and they also held control over the land, which made them the ruling caste and community of Mithila. One of the most remarkable traits of Maithil Brahmins was that they were truly conservative about their Maithil culture and

worked actively to preserve it. Whatever power the other communities of Mithila could enjoy was credited to the support of British colonisers. But the Brahmins were much more resistant, for they refused to be engulfed by modernity and continued to practice conservation. They ‘correctly identified acculturation as the most serious threat to their position’ (Dewey, 1976), for acculturation, by introducing new influences, dilutes and corrupts the original culture. As Brahmins, their duty of preserving the culture was at stake when British colonisers introduced new social concepts. Yet, another custom of maintaining the purity of their Brahminical culture, the children of Maithil Brahmin families didn't attend government schools but instead went to traditional schooling institutions, called pathshalas and tols. Srotriya Brahmins of Mithila neither left their homeland for education nor for trade and business until the 1930s when the maharajas of Darbhanga started to break this rule.

Jata Shankar Jha was true, a flagbearer for the recognition of Bihari history, with the richness of his research and publications, more frequently centred around the history of Mithila, especially that of the Darbhanga empire. The Maithili language movement has worked better than its newer counterparts, with the great body of literary work published in the earlier phases of this linguistic movement (Jha, 2018). Bhojpuri and Awadhi started and gave movement to their fight for autonomy and acknowledgement well later than Maithili could, for the writers in Maithili were able to start the movement early on, owing to the strong writer's influence. Bhojpuri and Awadhi lacked this degree of literary body, which delayed their revolution until visual and oratory media was introduced. A huge chunk of credit to the establishment of the Maithili language in its movement vouching for dominance and appreciation, therefore, goes to the Brahmins and the relatively obedient maharajas of Mithila and Darbhanga (Jha, 2020). Because the Brahmins of Mithila worked actively towards preserving language and literature, the writers of the Maithili language knew that there was a platform for their work to be showcased and could learn under the tutelage of purists and traditionalists. Therefore, the Mithila language movement was empowered to promote its cause in its whole glory, without any manipulation of an external ideology, and at the first opportunity that it could procure.

Maithili: Maithili is classified as a New Indo-Aryan (NIA) language, which, in the present times, is spoken by a rough estimate of 21 million people of India (Census, 2011). It is also included in the curriculum of various universities across West Bengal, Bihar, and Nepal. However, this was not the case in the last century when Maithili was not called a language but instead a dialect of a greater ‘language’ termed ‘Bihari’. While a dialect is characterised simply by the words that are spoken and the accent, a language is also a social marker of an individual’s

identity for it encompasses the culture that it is spoken by as well (Yadav, 1996). Dialects may differ within cultures, but languages differ across cultures. And, with its cultural concentration and isolation to the Brahmins and Kayasthas of Mithila, Maithili is clearly a cultural marker. Mithila has been very frequently mistaken for a dialect of Hindi and Bengali, as seen in the false identification of eminent Maithili literary figure Vidyapati as a Bengali poet (Beames, 1857). One prevailing reason for the Bengali misconception is the older script of Mithila, which was called Mithilakshar or Tirhuta, and was written similarly to how Bengali is written in today's times.

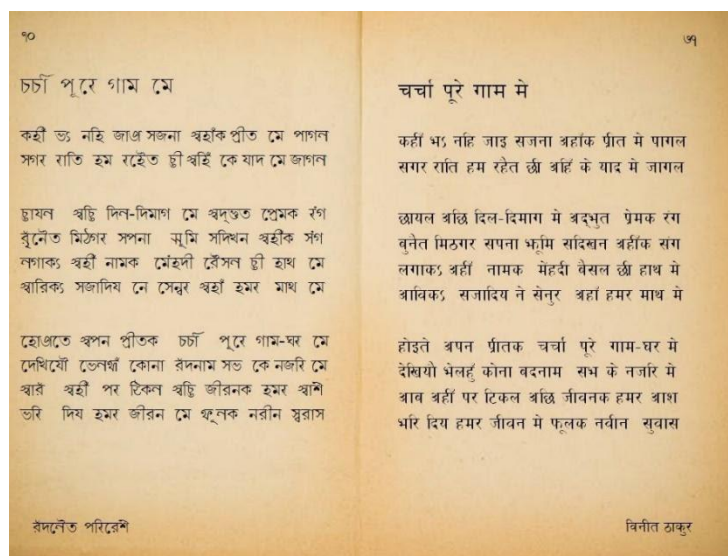


Image 3: File photo of how Mithila was written in Mithilakshar/Tirhuta font then (left), in comparison to how it is written now in Devnagri (right). Source: Pinterest

Maithili Language Movement: The confusion and chaos that had been created around the Mithila language and its identity must be, undoubtedly, one of the reasons why the Mithila language movement is needed. Not only is it for the sake of a cultural distinction, but it is also for the greater good of the society, which has been monopolised by Hindi speakers and is making it tough for other languages to thrive and share space, leading to great ostracism. When did Maithili, as an aspiring language, start voicing its stance, is still unknown to us, but it is known that Jyotirishwar Kavishekharacharya's *Varna Ratnakara* (1324) is recorded as the oldest text written in Maithili. Was the discovery of this text a stimulus for the movement, or was it the debut of Vidyapati, the advocate for Maithili? The answer is yet to be found.

Over the years, the Maithili language movement has changed shape and size based on how it can gain popularity according to the times. From literature to cinema to drama, the Maithili

language movement has adapted itself well enough to popularise its cause throughout changing times. Mithila boasts of culturally rich history, wherein citizens have made genuine and sincere efforts for the sake of its sustenance. The authoritarians who hold power worked actively to avoid infiltration into the culture, owing to which the culture could grow unstoppably and without intervention. This trait of Mithila was an important part of its linguistic movement because it propagated the cause of Maithili as an organic language. This, in turn, led to special emphasis on the education of literature in Maithili, which promoted the success of writers like Vidyapati and Hari Mohan Jha, who wrote fervently and so helped Maithili create a mark as a language.

The Maithili Writers and the Emergence of Journals and Magazines

Vidyapati and Hari Mohan Jha :

Vidyapati (1352-1448), long after his death, continues to hold a legacy in the culture of Maithils, so much that there is an entire quarter in Bihar named after him, as Vidyapati nagar. The airport of Darbhanga, too, is named after him. It is often said that he was the first participant recorded in the Maithili language movement. In the 15th century he argued against the statements that Maithili was a simple dialect of Bihari or Hindi. He came from a dynasty of conservative scholars in Mithila which explains why he prominently wrote in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Maithili. While his other texts were composed in various languages, including Persian, his Padavali, primarily Shaivite and Vaishnavite by theme, was in Maithili. This made Vidyapati an important figure in the Bhakti movement of Indian poetry. His poems remain terse and simplified despite the richness of his linguistic education, as is seen in his Padavalli. Poems in the Padavalli describe the pining of the protagonist for her lover, both assumed as the divine pair of Radha-Krishna: 'My love in a foreign land ravishes beauties which belong to others'/'Life too will go and we shall never love again' (Translated by Poetseers.org from Padavalli, Vidyapati, written between 1448 and 1460). The fact that the theme of this particular poem comes across as cheeky makes it a popular track to play amongst folk singers and in get-togethers to create an environment of fun. Beyond this, the poem is also of a very relatable and coveted theme, of devotion, and love and pangs of separation. This is the very reason the poem strikes throughout classes as it encompasses a universal theme. By inviting all classes of people to sing and chant in the Maithili language on the most joyous of occasions, Vidyapati works actively to popularise the cause of the language.

Hari Mohan Jha (1908-1984) was another important name in Maithili literature, whose work was more specifically dedicated to a hierarchically upwards audience, for it was written literature, unlike that of Vidyapati, which encompassed all media and so could be comprehended by all, regardless of their education. His novel 'Khattar Kaakaak Tarang', translated into Hindi as 'Khattar Kaka', is a comic take on a geriatric protagonist, the titular character of this novel. The preface introduces him as someone whose thoughts and philosophy are as good as an '*Ulti Ganga*', a Hindi idiom that refers to someone who thinks and act quaintly different from others. With this, the novel opens up to an interesting character that everyone will enjoy because of his comic antics. Its chapters are each based on different hilarious instances of the protagonist, Khattar Kaka. In the first chapter, titled "Ramayan", the narrator, a young boy, invites the protagonist to watch the popular Ram Leela staged during Navratri. However, Khattar Kaka refuses, owing to his negative perspective towards ancient king Lord Rama, calling him someone who didn't know how to respect women as he doubted his wife's chastity and therefore tested her so fervently. The conversation between the young boy and Khattar Kaka is near thought-provoking, as he raises some interesting questions about what morals Lord Rama actually teaches. Keeping Khattar Kaka's ideologies aside, what is interesting to note is the usage of language and context, '*Isiliye toh Mithila ke log kehte hain ki Paschim ki taraf beti nahi byaahni chahiye*' (That's why Mithila's people say that women shouldn't be married off to a home in the West). This establishes a stronger connection with the people of Mithila, for it reflects their ideologies. This is something to note, for the usage of language has helped Jha in invoking the regional patriotism of Maithili speakers by giving them a voice, therefore propelling the culture to feel pride and stand up for their recognition against a hegemonic force that dilutes cultures and their voices. It was noted in the preface that this novel, besides Hindi, has been translated into both Gujarati and Tamil. This proves that the novel *Khattar Kaakak Taarang* has successfully captured immense attention and helped establish Maithili as a language with a rich literary body that needs to be read and appreciated.

Chandra Nath Mishra and Journalism in Maithili: When one speaks of Maithili journalism, the first name that comes up is Chandra Nath Mishra (1925-2021), famously titled 'Amar'. The poet behind various titles such as *Ritupriya* and *Gudgudi*, and the author of Sahitya Akademi award-winning *Maithili Patrikaritak Itihas*, Mishra had founded the magazine 'Vaidehi', which was a platform for literature in Maithili. Mishra is regarded as a 'classicist' (Sahitya Akademi), which suggests that he adhered to the purist nature of Maithili literature and that he stayed true to its cause hence allowing it to flourish. And at the same time, Mishra is an

unapologetic user of idioms and colloquial language suited to his origin of Mithila (Sahitya Akademi). His undying sentiment towards his language is an uplifter of the movement because it embraces the language in its full glory and instils pride in it. Mishra sees literature as something that 'elevates the soul' (Sahitya Akademi), which explains his motive behind the initiation of 'Vaidehi' and his taking up the editorial position at a few other magazines that promoted Maithili writing. By being the evangelist and advocate of the Maithili writing group, Mishra helped Maithili writers gain a stance in the literary world and therefore establish Maithili as a language with a legacy of literature that speaks for its people and for its tradition. *E-Samaad* and *Videha* are two news services that operate in Maithili in today's times. The pool of newspapers and journals that has been created over the years is incredible and extensive and doesn't restrict itself to simply the region of Mithila, but spans across parts of India such as NCR, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh amongst other states. The newspaper *Maithili* served in the United States from 1983 to 1995. Even though the widespread media in Maithili helped Maithili speakers to locate their roots and indirectly become a part of the larger language movement by simply participating, it ironically refuted the custom of restriction to the region. This may have caused the language to evolve and change shape, which may even pose a threat to the ideals of the language, yet it connected people across the world and made the voice that spoke for cultural pride even stronger.

Maithili Writings: the backbone of the language movement: Literature was definitely the first step that needed to be taken for the Maithili language movement to pull through, as that was the only available option back then. Crediting Vidyapati and his diverse scholarly background, the Maithili language found its place in poetry, which was then adapted into folklore and gained the populace. This very populace was a motive for writers to come forward and contribute to the literary culture of Maithili as writers were inspired by Vidyapati's success and were motivated to share their work with the folk. Theatre was a prominent means of adapting the work of Maithili writers, and with creative incorporation of the literature, it was celebrated and enjoyed such that Maithili was stoked with patriotism and the need to carry their legacy.

Adding entertainment value with a personal touch to literature helped the legacy traverse through generations. Journals like *Maithil Hit Sadhana*, *Maithili Darpan*, *Jagle Rahbai* were a means of inviting writers and of educating people about Mithila, encouraging people to uphold their language. *Ijot*, a magazine edited by Chandranath Mishra, was a literary magazine that worked towards promoting Maithili writers such that they were established in the literary scene

and could represent Maithili literature. Journalism, especially when political, serves the purpose of propaganda and therefore invites those concerned to raise their voice. The *suyamariyathai* (self-respect) movement of Tamil Nadu was a strongly journalistic movement where Dalits and women wrote to speak up against intolerance that they would face on a daily basis (Srilatha, 2003). Periyar, the leader of the movement, emphasised the role of literacy in activism as only when the people were enabled to be aware would they be able to make others aware. Similarly, literate people helped Maithili speakers stand up for their cause by writing on Maithili recognition in journals.

The Politics of the Maithili Language Movement

Hindi hegemony: Regional languages struggling to thrive alongside Hindi in public setups (Kishore, 2017). There is a lack of relatability of people who belong to north India, to their culture, for they aren't adept with their language. This issue may not be seen with someone who hails from Maharashtra, West Bengal, Gujarat or any other states that fall in the eastern, western and southern belts. Hindi, Punjabi, Haryanvi and Urdu are gaining supremacy in the closest metropolitan area to Bihar, which is Delhi, and so, other languages of the hills are growing distant from their speakers (Kishore, 2017).

Two primary reasons for this can be geographical proximity and consequentially the popularity of some languages over others. Since Delhi is even closer to Haryana and Punjab and hub to one of the most famous Islamic destinations of the Jama Masjid, it is more populous of Haryanvi, Punjabis, and Muslims who speak the three most popular languages. In 10,000 persons, 8492 speak Hindi while 520 speak Punjabi and 517 speak Urdu (Census, 2011). Considering that the speakers of the second and third popular languages are restricted to regions such as Old Delhi and Karol Bagh, they are diminishing in number. This popularity leads to these languages being favoured more, and languages such as Maithili, Magadhi and Bhojpuri, to name a few, struggle to find their place as they don't have a pop culture to boast of as much as Haryanvi has, for instance. When India got rid of colonisers, the government decided to adopt a language that could be used as part of official records to manage the nation. English wasn't an option because it was a reminder of colonialism, so common parlance stuck to Hindi. But time changed the course of this perspective when regions started to protest against how Hindi was being imposed upon the other states that traditionally spoke another language. While more populated regions such as Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa and the likes were able to fight for the predominance of their original language over Hindi, a difficulty arose for smaller regions of the country such as the Bhojpuri-speaking belt or the Magahi-speaking belt. These regions

have found difficulty in establishing an official language and have therefore had to stick with official Hindi. Hindi is a language that absorbs from others, which hints to the perspective that was developed towards the other regional languages- they were being perceived as part of Hindi (Rai, 2001).

Urdu Imposition and the corrective efforts made by emerging political parties: In July 1980, Chief Minister of Bihar, Jagannath Mishra supported the government's decision to formalise Urdu as the second official language of the state, which irked the Maithil community of Bihar as their elected representative didn't consider their recognition. Chetana Samiti, an activist group that vouched for the Maithili language, called this an appeasement of a certain community that preferred speaking in Urdu while also disturbing the cultural decorum of Maithili as it struggled to be included in the ^{8th} schedule of the Indian Constitution. This move was severely condemned for its ignorance of six major districts that spoke in Maithili (Ahmed, 2014). All India Maithili Sangh and Maithili Sangharsh Samiti were some of the political parties that raised uproar towards this neglect towards Maithili officiation, as they clubbed to form an organisation that went by the name Maithili Mukti Morcha. This stimulated the growth and inauguration of more such parties that radically fought for their cause through gatherings such as rallies where they were truly vociferous. Political parties were formed only for the purpose of promoting Maithili language prevalence. Maithili Sahitya Parishad was one of such parties that approached language politics bottom-up as it invited people to participate by doing whatever they could. Maithils were encouraged to write their mother tongue as Maithili in official processes such as college admissions so that Maithili was recognised as a language and could be put into official records. Political parties worked such that their agendas were suited to the natural growth of the movement, demanding that Maithili become the state language of Bihar. Though unsuccessful, this petition made it clear that Maithili wasn't going to be taken lightly and that its speakers were serious about their words. Chaturanand Mishra, a Member of Parliament, wasn't convinced as he saw no growth of Maithili and believed that students should study more helpful subjects like the sciences, math, or a language that is more frequently spoken.

Mishra understood that the language is spoken only by a few people, which is why it cannot grow at a larger level, and was concerned with the functionality of the language at a formal stage and not with its thriving off it. Mishra's worry is a hint that a language, in order to be recognised, needs to be made part of identity by a larger group that can confirm its existence (Jha, 2018). Sahitya Akademi now considers Maithili as one of the many Indian languages,

which is a definite sign of the efficiency of the government. The Sahitya Akademi now offers a catalogue on their official website that consists of a range of literature written in the 22 languages of the eighth schedule. In the catalogue, there are a variety of genres ranging from poetry to short stories to children's fiction that were originally published in Maithili. These works of literature encourage all age groups and people from different walks of life to know more about their language as they invite different audiences simultaneously.

Politics as the Voice of Maithili Speakers: Authorities and large groups make the job easier for such large-scale movements as they work collaboratively to ensure the purpose of the movement is fulfilled. Politics must, at all costs, be a part of all causes, for it personifies the revolution and gives it a voice. Maithili speakers found support in their fellow speakers and in politicians who rose to power. These sources raised their voice such that they were responsible for making the cause known (Jha, 2018).

The Role of Social Media in Activism of the Maithili Language Movement

Social media as the voice of activists

In 2018, many people, especially women, voiced themselves and opened up about something that had been a taboo for long, under the hashtag #MeToo. Women from all parts of the world united to narrate their tryst with sexual harassment and molestation, openly called out their abusers and held them accountable for their actions after many Hollywood actresses accused producer Harvey Weinstein of misconduct. Sajid Khan, the filmmaker, was dropped out of his own film for accusations. With pace, this movement grew, and men came forward to speak up about being victims under the hashtag #MenToo. These hashtags not only served in giving people a voice and especially worked around curbing the taboo towards male victims, but they also helped other survivors find solidarity as there came a safe space that was ready to hear them out without judgement.

Similarly, the #BlackLivesMatter movement established itself on social media to educate people about prevalent racism against African-Americans, gaining momentum during incidents such as the brutalisation and deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Artists and influencers saw this movement as a mode of getting viewership and engagement because of how it trended, so they started posting topically, sharing content best suited to the cause. From statistics and facts to propaganda posters to poems that expressed the pain and grief of the marginalised African-American community, the shared information inspired many to support the movement and raise their voice against prejudice. Social media has become a multi-directional medium that shares information where details are connected to each other and many

perspectives are given together such that a broader understanding of the issue is achieved. This helps those willing to participate in making this cause stand out by giving them enough data to support their articulation and advocacy.

The Maithili language movement on social media

Looking back upon this project puts into realisation the fact that Maithili is one such language that may not be so popularly taught among children, especially to those who have lived in suburban and urban cities all their life. Therefore, the most coveted two social media platforms that can give space to this movement to be recognised are Facebook and YouTube, which are more favoured amongst middle-aged people and senior citizens, who have the potential to become ambassadors of the cause through social media. The most loved thing about social media is the spontaneity and speed with which art and expression can reach a stipulated level of appreciation, making it a top reason for social media to be chosen as a medium where artists share their work. Maithili language and the cultural movement has found their ground in social media through fine arts and performing arts as singers and poets, besides chefs and craftsmen, share their work on Facebook and YouTube for all to cherish. Maithili language speakers feel a sense of pride instilled in them through these very artists and are therefore compelled to share these artists and their work with their fellow Maithili speakers, therefore establishing a cultural identity of Maithili language (Various groups on social media site Facebook).

Madhur Maithili, a YouTube channel that serves the purpose of entertainment, is known for its mascot, Laal Kaki, a woman who comically portrays satire. Hilarity works as a ticket to the pop culture industry and further establishes the cultural scenario of Maithili, besides giving Maithili joy as it portrays their culture in a relatable manner. *Madhur Maithili* also conducts workshops and events suited to promote Maithili artists and educate them about their skillset to make a mark in the larger sphere of the world, thus fulfilling the purpose of the Maithili language movement, which initially was its very recognition. *Maithili Readers & Writers Association* is an open Facebook group that is occasionally spammed by self-promoting bloggers but predominantly features authors and readers and other artisans who hoist their Maithili pride in the sky. *Progressive Youth Network* is another such Facebook page that works towards the youth politics of the Mithila region. Their entire purpose is to create awareness for Maithili speakers about current issues such as the COVID-19 protocol that must be followed, and they also educate upon Maithil culture. Occasionally, poets and writers from all over the world post in Maithili. For example, Santosh Singh from New York has shared his Maithili

poem on their page. The utilisation of Facebook in the manner of education enables the Maithili language movement to continue its legacy of literature as its speaker base is strengthened.

Social Media & Generation Z: *Maithili Language Movement today*: Literary blogger Smriti Sant introduced a trend *#LitWithRegionalLit* (Instagram hashtag) first in April 2018, where she encouraged readers from all over India to hold their literary culture with great pride by reading regional literature translated in English. With various bloggers taking part in this movement by sharing book reviews of works written originally in Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, the movement has only been a success with an increasing number of participants and has surely created awareness about Indian literature. A trend like this can take Maithili to a more enlightened stage where it is identified and known by generations alike.

Bengali sees strong supremacy in translated literature, Malayali running up. John understands this through references to Arunava Sinha, who has observed a dearth of translators in other languages and has seen skilled translators primarily in Bengali (John, 2021). Bengali literature also has a literary body that is associated with sophistication and elegance because of names like Satyajit Ray and Rabindranath Tagore, which makes it a more preferred and intriguing language or culture to read on. Tamil and Malayali literature, on the other hand, gains preference because of its unfiltered and raw depiction of the culture, hence creating a different kind of interest in readers. If educated well enough and motivated by the cause, Maithili translators can help the Maithili language movement reach this Instagram trend. Bloggers like Smriti Sant can contribute to this movement by reviewing and discussing Maithili literature as part of their campaign and recommending others to do the same. Maithili Tutor by Abhinav Jha, a non-resident Maithili speaker, is a mobile application that teaches Maithili from scratch to its users, inspiring more people to appreciate the value of his language. Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan took to Twitter last year to congratulate colleague Neetu Chandra for her Maithili film *Mithila Makhaan* as it made it to the 63rd National Film Awards (Hrithik Roshan, Twitter, 2020). An actor like him who holds immense influence over the Indian *junta* can motivate the movement simply by appreciating the art published in the language as people will be inspired to follow his actions.

Social media as a platform of new age politics: Similar to how politicians spoke up in the mid-20th century in favour of Maithili recognition, everyone finds room to speak up on social media against issues that bother them. From the common man to celebrities, everyone participates in a cause that is dear to them. Social media can hence make the voice of the movement roar louder as more people are allowed to be a part of it.

Conclusion

Time and again, the dynamics of revolutions triggered by a certain sort of negligence have proven that standing up for a cause does indeed help. However, it is not unknown that education is the key to a successful revolution because it grants power in the hands of the activist and enables them to find an appropriate medium to express their sentiments. When an activist is educated and empowered, they have the right resources to educate other people who could significantly take the revolution forward. In this study, the various means of political education have been understood as they have changed shape and taken different forms over the years. Beginning with literary education under the tutelage of Vidyapati, Hari Mohan Jha and such others, the movement started to find its place in journalism where the creative platform for aspiring writers encouraged Maithili writers to unite with their roots. When Maithili writers started to represent their culture, people were charged with a patriotic enigma that demanded of them to fight for the independence of their language from the dialect tag. The folk of Mithila strived for having it known to the world that they weren't going to back down from their stance and that they would not stop until Maithili got the recognition and respect that it deserved as a primary language of Mithila. By being more accessible to all, social media sites have benefited the outreach of the Maithili language movement beyond expectations as the sites can be accessed from wherever and whenever regardless of the user's location. They serve as the best educators about the movement because they present numerous resources that can help at the same time. This enhances the politics of the movement when more people are aware and become part of the cause regardless of their cultural roots.

The politics through which the Maithili language movement has operated have changed their dynamics severely over the years. The movement started earlier because of the proficiency that its flagbearers held over the language and could establish itself in the literary environment while other languages struggled. Then it took to other forms of expression and has been consistent ever since. It has borne fruit as Maithili is now taught across universities as a specialisation subject in Master of Arts programmes (Course curriculum at IGNOU and NOU), and the language is now one of the 22 languages of India according to the ^{eighth} schedule of the Indian Constitution. Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Angika and Vajjika are some of the other languages of Bihar that have long suffered the wrath of Hindi hegemony. They, too, must take inspiration from the success of the Maithili language movement and thrive similarly to ensure that they find their place in the pool of diversity that they have been prohibited from.

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EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON LANGUAGE TRENDS AMONGST YOUNG ADULTS ¹

Abstract: *This study aims to understand how media influences language trends and this study is to understand how media influences language trends and to identify the popular language trends amongst young adults. This research is conducted using existing data from the literature, insights collected using netnography and conducting a primary survey. The primary survey for the study was conducted amongst college-going young adults belonging to different streams and colleges in Mumbai. The survey results showed that the media has a significant influence on language trends amongst young adults. It is responsible for either starting or promoting various temporary and permanent trends. Popular language trends such as word abbreviation, increased slang usage, increased usage of curse words, improvement in fluency and vocabulary, and increased use of vocables were identified and their implications were discussed. The study then concludes presenting the theory that there seems to be a backward trend in language and communication evolution.*

Introduction: Young adults (17-29) are exposed to a range of media such as television, the internet, and the radio daily, and these forms of media have become an essential factor in their lives. In today's time watching a tv show or a film is considered the best way of spending free time. A report published by landmark and released by Common Sense Media found that teenagers have been using an average of nine hours of entertainment media per day which would not include the time they spend using media for school or homework (Common Sense Media, 2015). Media consumption by young adults has drastically increased in the last 5 years, and along with the consumption, there has been a very significant and alarming amount of change in the way we communicate especially in the last few years. The covid-19 pandemic caused everyone to isolate and stay at home to be safe, which has had a significant impact on the way we use language and communicate, most people didn't see their loved ones for many months at a stretch. During this Covid-19 pandemic, people had an unprecedented amount of free time which led to them spending hours consuming content

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online, especially young adults (ETBrandEquity, 2021). The (EY, 2021) report stated that due to covid-19, television and digital media consumption and viewership have increased drastically amongst all age groups.

Media is said to have the power to influence and shape our culture. Our idiolect is no exception to the reaches of the media. To put it in simple words, the words we are surrounded by every day will influence the words we use every day. Language is ever-evolving and has changed a lot over the past few years. The media is suspected to play a major role in these changes. Media creates both temporary and long-lasting language trends that are adopted by young adults. It is common for some words or phrases heard on famous shows, films, or media platforms to become a part of our everyday language. Sometimes we don't even realize when these words become a part of our idiolect. It is even a common practice for people to learn a new language through tv shows or adapting phrases of a new language because of being exposed to media in that language. When it comes to establishing parameters of determining the influence of media on humans, it has been very difficult for researchers considering so many factors are involved. It is assumed by many sociolinguists and researchers that media influences language attitudes, but there is not much research done on the same. This study will be a step forward in studying the influence of media on language trends and hence also communication. Trends are very important to research for understanding the progress and history of any topic. Trends not only help us document and evaluate the current conditions of the world but also play a significant role in helping us predict the future and prepare for it. Innovation needs time and understanding and predicting the future is what has made technology and civilization come this far. As they say, the technology you are currently using was most likely developed years ago.

Language impacts all parts of our lives from what kind of food we eat to the clothes we wear. Understanding language trends and the direction it's headed in is necessary for many reasons. Not only is language responsible for communication easy but our idiolect also shapes our personalities. Young adults are the future of this world and it's important to understand what shapes their personalities. Young adults are believed to be spending the highest number of hours consuming content and they are the ones who shape the internet pop culture so naturally, the impact of media on the language trends amongst them is crucial to understand. Lastly, it is also important to understand language trends considering the significant implications they have on our lifestyle and world.

Objective for the research: The objective of this study is to explore the influence of media on language trends amongst young adults (17-22). The first objective is to identify the significant and popular language trends amongst young adults and their implications (17-22) and the second objective will then be to understand how media influences these language trends.

Literature review:

Keywords: Media, Tv-Shows, Films, Language Trends, Young Adults

Concept:

Language trends: Language trends are the general direction in which language is headed towards, language trends could be defined as the popular methods of communication through language which are practiced by the masses. To elaborate, language trends mean the current popular usage of language. The term language trends covers everything from how certain words are used to where are people learning new words from, how is the vocabulary improving, is and if yes, how is the fluency improving, what are the popular terms and how often are they used, how do people communicate using popular words, what is their preference in the method of communication, popularization of slang terms, why and how are earlier words being replaced with new ones, excessive use of certain words or idioms, and references, etc.

Language trends as a concept essentially mean what are the current “hip” or popular methods of communication and usage of language.

“A language is not just words. It’s a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It’s all embodied in a language.” - Noam Chomsky (Noam Chomsky, 2010), (Makepeace, 2010)

Language is the most essential factor in our day-to-day lives. It is what helps us experience safe social interactions and communicate with others. Language differentiates and sets us apart from all the other animals and species. Other animals and species communicate but their mode of communication is nowhere as sophisticated, detailed, and complex as ours. Language has had a long journey of evolution over the years. The importance of language is not the subject of question but the origin of language is what scholars and linguists have

argued over for years. Various prominent theories infer from historical evidence how and when language originated and its process of evolution but to date, there has not been an absolute agreement to any theory. The shortage of direct empirical evidence has even caused scholars to disregard this topic for debate as well causing a body such as the Linguistic Society of Paris to take serious action like banning any existing or future debates on the subject in 1866 (Hauser, Marc D, et al., 2014). However, the origin of language or studying language acquisition isn't the focus of this study, this study aims to explore the influence of media on language trends amongst young adults (17-22). To understand how media impacts language trends, we must first look at the consumption patterns of media in India and then further look into existing studies pertaining to the impact of media on language. Language trends should be given the most importance because these trends define how the world communicates and can help us predict in what way it will communicate in the future, however, the trends would have to be identified using existing literature, data as observed from the internet and the data from the primary survey.

(EY, 2021), Playing by new rules: FICCI-EY Media and Entertainment Report, 2021. FICCI-EY in collaboration releases a media and entertainment report on the Indian M&E industry presenting all the key statistics and trends of the industry. The FICCI-EY report shows a tremendous increase in the consumption of content produced by OTT platforms, Television, and YouTube by the Indian Public. The consumption has seen a sudden surge because of the current covid-19 pandemic and is projected to see even greater growth. The increase in content consumption especially by the young adult demographic has played a huge role in influencing the language trends and the way they communicate. Internet culture plays a defining role in the onset of any trend. According to the (EY, 2021) report, internet penetration has increased by 11% to reach 795 million and about 45% of India's population over 15 years of age had access to a smartphone by December 2020. Not only this but it also states that Indians spent 4.6 hours a day on their phones, increased their data consumption by 15% over 2019, and aggregated 450 million online entertainment consumers in 2020. All these statistics explain the increase in media consumption.

(Antonio Díez Mediavilla, 2016) Antonio Díez Mediavilla talks about how watching tv in English voluntarily makes a major contribution to improving your overall language skills including both speaking and writing. Students are often found to use the tv as both a source for entertainment and to improve their language skills after gaining basic proficiency in the

language. The study provides evidence that students are finding it easier to access video streaming services which expose them to semi-realistic situations providing them with an opportunity to learn English by following stories set in different times, places, realities, and contexts. The research further also mentions how when academic acquisition proves to be insufficient, incidental learning takes the helm, and children and teenagers are more likely to practice incidental learning while watching a show rather than adults. The study also states that the recent computational models of language acquisition suggest that there are similarities between mechanisms of incidental learning and those of natural language acquisition (Saffran et al.: 1997). The study then concludes by stating that student preferences and intrinsic motivation, being less gradable approaches, have not been taken into account so far in most of the popular research work done in the area.

(Vijayakumar et al., 2020) Vijayakumar researched to study the impact of TV shows and sitcoms on a person's English language proficiency. After distributing a survey amongst college students studying engineering in the Vellore district, the results reveal that television and tv shows have had a huge impact on one's language acquisition. In the literature review of this study, the author mentions the investigation made by Zarei A & Rashvand Z (2011) and Kruger J-L, Hefer E, Matthew G (2013), which showed that subtitles in films and other audio-visual materials help the learners of English language to acquire language skills. This study confirms the factor that tv shows and television being watched even for just entertainment do add to one's vocabulary and language acquisition. The study also pointed out that viewers found it easier to socialize since they started watching the shows.

(Riaz & Arif, 2017) Riaz and Arif after observing the cultural influence of the dominant media, the authors researched to explore the effects of foreign entertainment TV programs on culture particularly fashion, lifestyle, and Urdu language in the youth of Pakistan. The research showed that entertainment programs have a deep influence on the fashion, language, and lifestyle of the youth. The study revealed that the efficiency of youth to speak fluent Urdu was affected by watching foreign tv programs, it was found that about fifty percent of respondents were found to use English words while speaking in Urdu to a greater extent while 41% mix was found to use English words to some extent. It was also interesting to see that the majority of respondents were not influenced by Hindi shows.

(Panicheva et al., 2010) Authors conducted a research merging subjectivity analysis and authorship attribution stating that performance of both could be improved by doing so. They concluded by results showing us that by acquiring the knowledge of the writer's idiolect the result of the polarity classification test can be improved. The researcher also projects a conjecture that personal sense strongly relates to occupation, the occupation has a daily influence on a person and as a result, it holds the power to shape a person's sociolect, which would be common for everyone in the same profession. Essentially presenting us with the hypothesis that occupation plays a huge role in a person's speech and idiolect.

(Grobler, 2014) Grobler starts with talking about how personality psychology became an identifiable discipline in the social sciences in the 1930s when Allport (1937) published an article on the psychological interpretation of personality. The study using the help of Basic Traits Inventory (BTI), a personality instrument based on the Five-Factor model explored the possible bias of the items of the BTI and used a sample as large as 105 342 respondents to analyze each of the eleven of the official languages of South Africa separately. The study concluded by confirming that the home language and English proficiency, as indicators of the level of understanding of the language in which they administered the personality instrument, undeniably did influence the individual's response pattern.

(Acharya, 2015) Acharya after observing the impact of popular culture forms like the internet, social media, cinema, and magazines on the youth, the researcher suspected the rise of a 'new' language style emerging amongst them and conceived a study to examine the impact of popular culture forms on the everyday language environment of Indian youth, to explore the various ways and methods by which popular cultural forms can be used for English language learning amongst students and to delineate the changes in the language habits of the youth because of the new adaptations. A questionnaire with both open-ended and closed-ended questions was distributed among students across Odisha. The study revealed that print media, the internet, television, and Social Networking Sites were affecting the English language environment of the Indian youth the most. The study also speaks about how the new media is generating a 'new' language style, a new way of communicating as shortcuts, simplifications, blends, etc affecting the youth.

(Falcon International Consulting, 2010) The report study titled Global Trends in Language Learning in the 21st Century talks about how the world is changing at a rapid pace and along

with the world the way we learn and teach has also changed. The old models of teaching are not effective anymore, the students have the world at their fingertips and can access any information at any point in time. Focus has been shifted from grammar, memorization, and learning to use knowledge as means of communication and connecting with people. The report concludes by stating that the trends in language learning are moving forward and with time the world and education system will have to adapt to this change.

(Zhou & Fan, 2013) This paper discusses American slang from a sociolinguistic point of view and analyses the factors influencing American slang, both individual factors, and social factors. These Individual factors are gender, occupation, and age, while the social factors include drug setting, homosexuality, and rock. The paper talks about how one's identity plays a huge role in the usage of slang and how to understand a country's culture, understanding its slang is very essential. Slang has become a very essential part of language and is used by almost everyone in their day-to-day life.

(Palander, 2007) Palander showed how if there is a discernible change in the speech of two previous generations, the same trend will continue in the idiolect of the following generation. If a feature varies in the idiolect as a child, it will change. The study also mentioned through a case study how the idiolect of a person is more likely to change during school years and early or young adulthood years. Being exposed to a great variety of speech models from speakers of different dialects extends linguistic knowledge. The study also touched on the fact that as an adult, you seem to use complex phrases which are more adult-like.

(Coulthard, 2004) Coulthard explores the authorship of written articles using the concepts of idiolect and the uniqueness of individual utterances. The article tries to draw results using examples from court and students and concludes that the evidence suggests that the concepts of idiolect and uniqueness of utterance are robust and supply a basis for answering certain questions on authorship with high confidence.

(Kraljic et al., 2008) Authors devices an experiment that explores whether different sorts of variation cause different cognitive and behavioral adjustments. Adjustments to an equivalent acoustic consequence when its context-independent variation is compared to context-conditioned variation. Both these cases provided very contrasting results which displayed that the source of a specific acoustic-phonetic variation affects how that variation is handled by

the perceptual system. That changes in perceptual representations don't necessarily cause changes in production is additionally shown through the study.

The above literature provides us with more context regarding the study field and media's influence on language trends. Literature shows a link between media and young adults. But the principal aim of this study is different from what has already been done till now, the above literature helps provide proof to the conclusion that media does impact language trends amongst young adults and this impact is of significant importance considering how one's idiolect is a huge part of one's personality.

Data Collection:

Methodology: For the purpose of this research, mixed methodology was used, existing literature, data as observed from the internet and primary data (collected through a survey) was used. Even a small interview was conducted with a local tattoo artist to gain deeper insights.

Primary data for the research was collected through a survey using a questionnaire. A set of questions pertaining to the research were prepared and circulated among the respondents through a google form using various modes of distribution like email, text messages, messages through social media sites such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook.

Sample size and details: A survey was conducted amongst college-going young adults belonging to different streams and colleges in Mumbai. Students belonging to the age group 17 to 22 were selected for the survey. 15 students from each age group are selected making the total sample size 90 (51 males and 39 females).

Research questions:

- What are the various language trends amongst young adults (17-22)?
- How does the media influence these language trends amongst young adults (17-22)?

Data Interpretation: Both the existing literature, observations from the internet and primary data show that media has had a very significant influence on the language trends amongst young adults (17-22). The media can clearly be held accountable for starting and promoting various language trends both temporary and permanent. Media has influenced a variety of

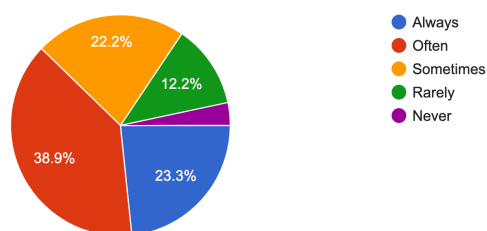
language trends but for the sake of this research let's focus on the popular and significant ones.

Appropriation of existing vocabulary and introduction of new vocabulary: One of the most significant and most commonly occurring phenomena is the appropriation of existing vocabulary and the introduction of new vocabulary (Foster, 2017). In this trend, various words that had existing meanings, have now obtained other meanings in a web context due to references in popular shows or movies, which then spills over into verbal communication and our lifestyle. Not only this but now specific alphabets even have another meaning to them thanks to popular culture (TV shows, films, and video) references attached to them. For example, the alphabet “F”, is used to point out sympathy for somebody else (F to pay respects was a meme that originated from the online game “Call of Duty”). Similarly, the alphabet W is used as a substitute for the word winning and L as a substitute for the word loss. Their use has become a very common practice, especially in the sports context. In a sentence they might be used like this: Tyson Fury handed Wilder an L in the recent fight, or it was an easy W for Tyson. Terms like “unfriend”, “selfie”, “spam”, “ribbit” have all originated and have since inherited popular use because of social media, films, shows. Several terms, such as YOLO and Amazeballs, have even made it into the Oxford Dictionary (Foster, 2017). After gaining popularity on social media, they started getting used everywhere from TV shows to online videos, hence boosting their popularity even more. In a study of 2,000 parents, conducted by Samsung and administered by the UK's leading English expert, Professor John Sutherland at University College London, 86% of participants said that they felt teens and children spoke a completely different language on social media. According to the study, there's now a 'seismic generational gap' regarding how modern informal language is getting used (Press Association, 2015). An interview with a local tattoo artist from Mumbai named Jay also revealed that youngsters often get these slang words or other catchphrases from shows and films tattooed. For instance, “winter is coming” from game of thrones, “buzzinga” from the big bang theory. The tattoo artist even shared the fact that a lot of couples come to get their name blended tattooed (Prerna-Ayush: Preyush). He also stated that these tattoos were most typically requested by young adults. The practice of name blending of celebrities to ship them in the 1900s was started by the media (Erin Clements, 2012). Now it's become a popular trend, it's so common that these name blends can even be seen on wedding invitations.

Political Correctness: The influence of tv shows, films, and videos is large especially when it comes to creating awareness. It is in the last few years that you can notice that a lot of mainstream shows have been trying to create awareness around certain taboo topics and words (ethnic slurs) and why they shouldn't be used. For example: In the fifth episode of Netflix's *Dear White People*. When Addison raps along to Future's "Trap N—" at a party and says the N-word in the lyrics, Reggie calmly asks his friend not to repeat it (Jenkins, 2017). Similarly, there are many other shows such as Fox's *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, ABC's *Black-ish* which have tried to create awareness. Many derogatory words have since stopped being used by people due to the awareness being created. Many YouTubers and celebrities have faced backlash and have been canceled (losing millions of dollars in the process) due to them saying these words which send out a strong message about how once educated on a topic, the internet can do better. The flip side is, some shows and movies have also harmed the audience by popularizing many derogatory words and phrases.

Bad Language: Bad language specifically refers to the drastic increase in the usage of curse words in everyday life. TV shows and Internet content often lack censorship and due to this very reason, a young audience is exposed to a variety of curse words daily. Not that swearing is unhealthy, but there has been a very significant rise in the usage of bad language amongst young adults in their day-to-day lives.

How often do you swear?
90 responses

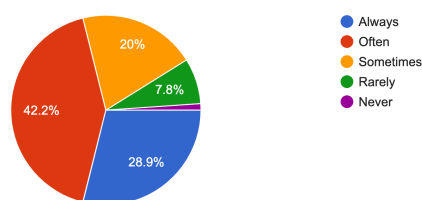


When asked how frequently do you swear on the survey most people said often (38.9%) while 23.3% of the people said always and 22.2% of the people said sometimes. To also take into consideration Americans are cursing more day by day. In fact, according to Business Insider India, the average American utters 80 to 90 curse words every day. That's about five curse words every waking hour (Anderson & Wilkin, 2018). According to a survey conducted by Daily Mail, it was found that seventy-six percent of those who responded said swearing on TV harms young people, while 68 percent felt that bad language 'led directly' to young people using foul language (Gilani, 2011). Not only this but also using substitute

actions for swear words like flipping someone off by showing the finger or doing the side hand clash coined by the character Ross in the popular show Friends has also become common ways of expressing amongst young adults. Many brands have also tried to use marketing strategies based on double Entradas such as booking.com, which substituted their f*cking with booking their brand name in an advert (Parish, 2013).

Slang: Slang as defined by the Oxford dictionary as words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, slang is more common in speech than writing, and is typically restricted to a particular context or group of people (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2022). Slang has managed to become a part of our idiolect due to constant verbal usage.

How often do you use slang language in everyday life?
90 responses

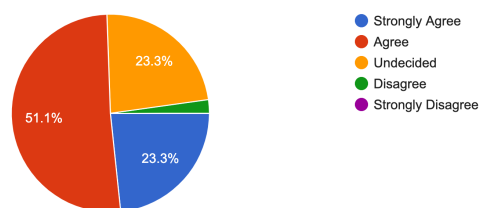


When explained what slang is and asked how often you use slang language in everyday life? About 42.2% of people admitted to using slang often while 28.9 % of the people admitted to using it always and 20% of the people said sometimes. Slang is not restricted by language and has infiltrated every language. The increase of slang usage can be considered dangerous for language as we know it. Due to this constant evolution in language, there are websites such as urban dictionary which cater to providing meaning for slang terms and acronyms used across the internet.

Acronyms: Acronyms are abbreviations of a word, they have become so natural to us that we don't even realize when we use them sometimes, this very paper for example is written and titled an IRP, an acronym for Independent Research Project. The (Acharya, 2015) study went on to reveal that print media, the internet, television, and Social Networking Sites were affecting the English language environment of the Indian youth the most and also mentions how the new media is generating a 'new' language style, a new way of communicating in the form of shortcuts and simplifications which affects the youth primarily.

Intelligence and Improved Vocabulary and Fluency: Language acquisition and learning from tv shows, films, and videos have been a topic of research for many researchers. The Antonio Díez Mediavilla study talks about how watching tv in English voluntarily makes a major contribution to improving your overall language skills including both speaking and writing (Antonio Díez Mediavilla, 2016). The study also mentions that the recent computational models of language acquisition suggest that there are similarities between mechanisms of incidental learning and those of natural language acquisition (Saffran et al.: 1997). The Vijayakumar study also confirms the factor that tv shows and television being watched even for just entertainment do add to one's vocabulary and language acquisition (Vijayakumar et al., 2020).

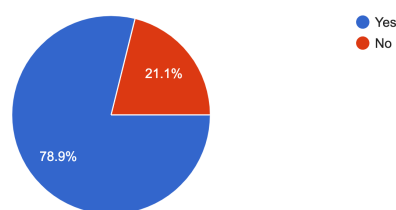
Do you think consuming media content has increased your vocabulary and helped you learn new words?
90 responses



When asked, do you think consuming media content has increased your vocabulary and helped you learn new words? more than half the people (51.1%) strongly agreed that consuming media content has increased their vocabulary and helped them learn new words and when asked “do you think consuming media content has increased your fluency in English?” Only a small fraction disagreed whereas the number of people who agreed and strongly agreed was the same (36.7% each). It’s not just vocabulary and fluency but when asked “would you say you find it easier to remember content from shows, films, and television rather than studies?” Only a small fraction (3%) disagreed, whereas 45.6% of the people agreed and 31.1% of the people strongly agreed that they find remembering content from shows, films, television easier than remembering studies. Media is also responsible for popularizing certain phrases from different languages and this, in turn, has led to the language barrier being lifted as people have started learning new phrases and using them in their daily lives and some people now want to learn the new language. K-dramas have been in the limelight recently and due to this international attention, Korean teaching institutes reveal there is a high surge in the demand to learn Korean (Koimoi Team, 2021).

Catch Phrases: Catch Phrases: Everyone has a different taste when it comes to liking content or a particular character but that's what makes it so special. There are always certain things such as the theme song, the background music, the iconic character, the dialogue, or a certain catchphrase that make the show memorable. So memorable that even after you stop watching the show that part of the show will always stay with you. Bollywood is famous for its filmy dialogues so it's no surprise that some of those dialogues have now been permanently burned into our idiolect and everyday usage. A catchphrase is not just a phrase, it's rather a sentiment or a way to portray an emotion, for example: "how's the josh?" has become a phrase that has patriotic value.

Do you or have you used any catchphrases or dialogues that you picked up from media for example: "how you doing?" "bazinga!", "mitron ", "hey ma mataji", "kuch toh gadbad hai"
90 responses



When asked “do you or have you used any catchphrases or dialogues that you picked up from the media?, for example: "how you doing?" "bazinga!", "mitron ", "hey ma mataji", "kuch toh gadbad hai". Majority of the respondents (78.9%) agreed to have used catchphrases or dialogues that they picked up from the media and then when asked, “how often do you use these phrases/dialogues?” 40% of the people said often and 26.6% said sometimes. With the increase in usage and popularity of catchphrases many entrepreneurs have seen it as a great opportunity for branding and have then opened cafes and restaurants based on various shows, even going as far as preparing a new from just popular pop-culture references and iconic dialogues from Bollywood movies. Due to the immense popularity that the show “Friends” enjoys, there are many FRIENDS themed cafes, with owners going as far as to even replicate the interior. Example: Friends Cafe in Surat, Gujarat. There is even a restaurant whose name is a double entendre referencing both the show and the iconic dialogue of our honorable prime minister Mr.Modi called “Mitron” in Bandra, Maharashtra. Not only these but there are hundreds of cafes and restaurants based on various shows. Especially the menu items being dedicated, for example, a small juice center in Borivali called “Bunty Juice Corner” has most of its juice drinks named after iconic Bollywood catchphrases.

Juice Ka Mela

Googly.....	130
Ganga Jamuna.....	100
Golden River Spl.....	130
Gangajal Spl.....	130
Hi-Fi Spl.....	130
Heer Ranjha.....	130
Hum Dono.....	130
Humkahein (Latest).....	130
Ina Mina Dika.....	100
Ika Baadshah Rani.....	100
Jugnu.....	130
Jugal Bandhi (Spl.).....	140
Kuch Khataa Kuch Mitha.....	120
King of Blossom.....	120
Ku Ku.....	130
Kohinoor.....	130
Kenya.....	130

Kalingar.....	140
Kuch Nahi.....	130
Keep Cool.....	130
Lalla O Lalla.....	130
Lal Pari.....	130
Lal Qila.....	130
Lal Gulabi.....	130
Mosambi.....	100
MMK.....	150
Muna Muni.....	100
Majnu (Latest).....	130
Maramari.....	130
Manchali (Spl.).....	130
Mountain (Spl.).....	130
Mango Madness.....	130
Make Naka.....	130
Meton Blossom.....	130

Image Source: A snapshot of the menu from Bunty Juice Corner

Not only cafes and restaurants but people have also started selling merchandise with iconic dialogues from their favorite characters. For example: Friends Merchandise.

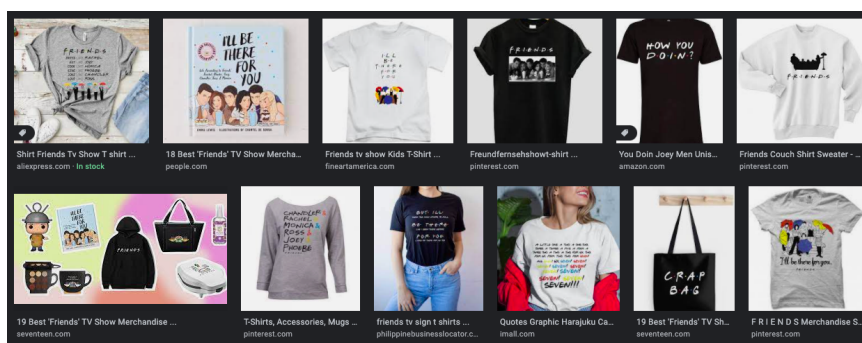


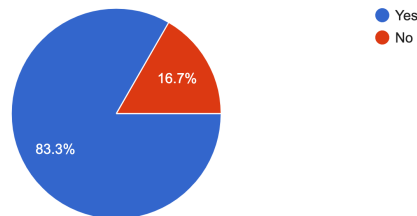
Image Source: Snapshot of google image search for friends tv show merchandise

Another way catchphrases impact us are they give us features such as the mobile torch being switched on when the command of Lumos is given to the google assistant or Siri and being switched off when the command Knox is given is only possible due to the popular adaptation of these made-up words from the world of harry potter.

Usage of Gifs-Memes: One of the most significant trends is the increase in usage of Gifs and Memes to communicate. Apps such as Instagram, Whatsapp Telegram now all have the inbuilt option to send Gifs, stickers, or memes to communicate. These memes and gifs are often taken from various famous tv shows, films, and videos. Instead of using words, people find it easier to convey emotions through images and animated videos. In a survey conducted by Harris Poll and commissioned by GIF platform Tenor, 36% of millennials ages 18 to 34 who use “visual expressions” such as emojis, GIFs, and stickers say that those images better communicate their thoughts and feelings than words do (Steinmetz, 2017). When asked

solely about conveying emotion through animated images, the preference was even greater: Nearly two-thirds of millennials said GIFs did the job better than words (Steinmetz, 2017).

Do you or have you used gifs and stickers of shows/movies to communicate with your friends?
90 responses



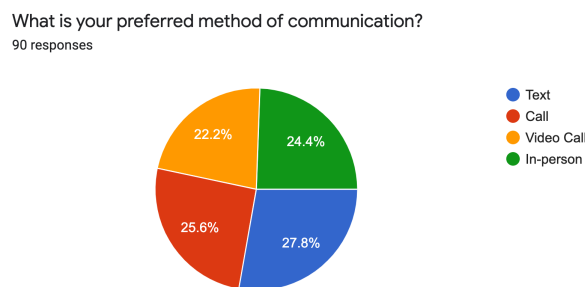
In the primary survey, a staggering 83.3 % agreed to have used a gif or sticker of shows/movies to communicate with their friends and most people also stated that they and their friends often (43.3%) send each other memes or gifs related to media content, while people who answered always and sometimes were 23.3% each. Not just young adults, almost all major brands and companies have started using memes and gifs as a method to be relatable and promote their products. Engaging with the followers is given a huge priority and therefore companies like Zomato have adapted to modern times and have used the platform to do so while advertising their own company.



Image source: A snapshot of Zomato's Instagram page and recent posts

Memes can also be considered as the universal language for communication for example if you are in a foreign country then you won't be able to communicate with the people there but if you show them a particular meme or gif related to a show they have also watched, they will understand immediately what sentiment you are trying to convey or what are you trying to say through that particular scene. Memes are not just for entertainment in the sense that now making memes is considered a professional job and it pays fairly well if you have the right skills.

Preferred mode of communication: The way people have preferred to communicate is constantly changing, while everyone has different preferences when it comes to communication, everyone ends up using similar methods of communication to frequently communicate. Covid 19 has also had a huge impact on this due to the fact that most people were not able to go outside their homes due to safety reasons for months and days at a stretch which has now made them want to either avoid contact from other people at all or go out at every first chance they get.



When asked the question of a preferred method of communication, the answer seemed to be almost equally divided, with text being the majority (27.8%) and when asked “what is the method you use most frequently to communicate?”, majority of people either use text (38.9%) or call (37.8%) to communicate frequently. This preferred mode of communication plays a huge role as apps such as this attitude of preferring text and that too as short as possible explains to us why the social media platforms such as Twitter which was invented with the intent to convey a message in limited characters or Snapchat whose primary feature is to communicate through images and not words are now famous and used by millions. So not only do language trends help us assess the current situation but they can also help us predict which platform will gain popularity in the future based on current trends.

Vocables: Vocables are words like sounds, which have broad meanings depending on context. The usage of vocables has been pretty popular in young adults due to vocables often being used in tv shows and films for comedic effect. An example of a vocable would be the ‘hmmm’ sound after eating something to indicate it is tasty. The increase in usage of Vocables can also be seen due to the massive uprise of the ASMR industry in recent years. The ASMR industry is built on providing mind soothing or satisfactory sounds. There are currently about more than 5.2 million ASMR videos on YouTube, and there is interest coming from all corners of the globe (Mooney & Klein, 2016). Not only this but recreating

ASMR sounds of various anime voice artists and listening to anime scenery music have become popular trends.

Discussion:

1) Onset of a backward trend: There is a clear visible pattern of a backward trend. Over the centuries language and communication has developed from drawing pictures on the cave wall and using sounds to the current modern day sophisticated systems we have. But now as we can notice through data that people have started preferring using images and animated videos over words and there has also been an increase in usage of vocables and other forms of communication which are fairly simple. Language has been ever evolving and will continue to maintain that aspect of itself, so it can't be said in what way it will leave but for now it can definitely be said that there is an onset of a backward trend.

2) The popularity is only going to increase and there will be many new language trends: Media consumption is predicted to increase at an unprecedented rate and this will also lead to an increase in both language trends and the influence of media on these trends. Although the basics of language will always stay the same, there are going to be a lot of changes that will take place in terms of usage and popular terms.

3) New way of education has to be implemented: The influence of media on language trends amongst young adults provides the world with an incredible opportunity to modernize the education systems and adapt with the times. E-learning as predicted will play a huge role in the future, with the covid-19 pandemic already boosting the e-learning industry, now it will soar even higher. Education will be completely revolutionized.

Conclusion: To conclude, the media has a very significant influence on the language trends amongst young adults (17-22) and many language trends either exist because of the media or are gaining popularity due to it. Many significant language trends such as frequent use of bad language, increase of slang usage, usage of acronyms and catchphrases in everyday life, the improvement in vocabulary and fluency through media, change in speech patterns and using gifs and memes as a mode of communication could be spotted amongst the young adults (17-22). The study discovers a pattern of backward trend when it comes to language usage and evolution but predicts that various significant changes are yet to come and with the popularity

of media growing day by day along with internet users increasing, language trends are only going to evolve further and further.

Future scope: In order to further explore the influence of media on language trends amongst young adults, an experiment could be designed where a sample is divided into two parts and one is exposed to a particular media piece for example the movie Gully Boy and the other group of people are not exposed to this movie. After the completion of the said movie the researcher could study what kind of changes the sample shows as far as language trends are concerned. Even a detailed study could be done on the particular types of language trend and understanding their evolution. There is a lot of scope for further research on this topic as it's a step in the fresh direction. One could even perform a study on exploring the influence of media such as gaming, music, books which are not included in this study. If studied in detail, language trends will provide us insights to almost all aspects of our lifestyle and help us make future predictions. Crypto industry, although not highly trusted by many, is community driven and has a market cap of trillions of dollars. It is a fact that meme coins and tokens made from these very language trends are worth billions today. Further studies could be done to understand the psychology behind these trends gaining popularity and how much they impact various industries.

Limitations: Finding pre-existing literature on this matter has been a great challenge since the research is headed in a new direction. The sample size of the research is very small and the results of this research will only be limited to college-going young adults from Mumbai, if the same study is done in any other city, the results may vary. Another aspect that wasn't considered here is the other forms of media such as radio, music, gaming, books and their influence on language trends.

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UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF MUSICAL PREFERENCES IN ADOLESCENCE¹

Abstract

Music as an art form is known to be one of the important factors in influencing generations of individuals since times immemorial. Moreover, the styles and attitudes portrayed by musicians are representative of the genre that they belong to. This culture of these genres represents attitudes, principles, and rules that dictate a pattern of life. Being inspired by artists of this magnitude provides a lot of individuals with a sense of identity, a sense of purpose, and a general attitude towards their daily life. However, the degree to which these factors influence their own choices is an important parameter to consider when the impact of music is put into research. This paper comprises an elaborate understanding of the causes of musical preferences from a genre-specific lens within the adolescence of the Indian demographic. It looks at a set number of causes that play an active role in determining the music choice of an individual. Additionally, it comprises an elaborate analysis of the impact of genre-specific preferences on the attitudes, behavior, and thought patterns of adolescents. Data from a focus group interview of 5 adolescents with different diverse music preferences within the Indian demographic is used to make the inferences, findings, and conclusions in the paper.

Keywords: Music preferences, impact of music, attitudes, choices, genres, tracks.

¹ This paper was written as a part of the Independent Research Project in Semester 4, (January-May,2021)

1.0 Understanding the Causes and Effects of Musical Preferences in Adolescence.

Listening to music is one of the most leisurely habits that exist on a universal level. This pattern of consumption is focused on different genres for different individuals. A closer look gives us a myriad of causes behind these underlying preferences and also sheds light on the impact that preferences have on different individuals. The causes and impact can be further streamlined to be studied in a more genre-specific way. This research can therefore help draw several inferences about how people differ because of their music choices.

This research project is centered on two of the main subtopics

a. Underlying causes behind music preferences.

This part of the research comprises a detailed understanding of what makes an individual choose a genre of music and continue to consume music from that genre over a set period. The choice of selection has multiple causes that can be studied in more detail.

Brain activity involved and measured through an Electroencephalogram can help us identify the patterns produced when an individual has even the slightest bit of inclination towards any kind of sound (Stelios K. Hadjidimitriou, Student Member, IEEE, and Leontios J. Hadjileontiadis, 2012). An important contrast should be made within music between sound and vocals when analyzing this brain activity. This is because when the vocals have lyrics, there's a higher chance of people forming an emotional connect which can dilute their decision-making. The main aim is to identify which form of music genre, only by its sound, people connect with and what neuropsychological factors are responsible for this natural inclination. Furthermore, the vocal quality and content can also heavily influence the preference of the individual. The nature of such a preference could come under factors like exposure to a particular genre from a young age, relevance, and relativity of the lyrics, tendency, and biases based on the acoustic properties of the vocals. A detailed study about the same can help reveal several other factors that are responsible for the inclination towards certain music genres.

b. The impact of music on the attitudes, perspectives, and behaviour of individuals.

Listening to music is one of the most leisure activities of human behavior. However, the nature of this music also influences humans in several ways. A detailed analysis of how different genres influence the behaviors and attitudes of humans is crucial to understanding their impact on

humans. As per Wells (1985), Music is known to have a definite impact on mental states and Moods. How this translates over a longer period is important in understanding the effect of music on human behavior. Since an individual has a dynamic personality, music plays an active role in bringing out those thoughts and emotions which are latent. Genres like hip hop are known to fantasize the vices; its influence on adolescents makes them highly susceptible to giving in to these vices. These choices that the listeners make can be attributed to the kind of music that they are listening to. The content of the music is another solid factor that is responsible for altering the attitudes of listeners towards things in their day-to-day life. Music can activate the limbic system in an individual's brain, and thereby forms an emotional connection with the listener, which can be viewed as a reason for a change in their attitude and behavior over some time. The element of subjectivity opens the ground for numerous possibilities of how music leads to emotional and physiological arousal; this can be quantified into certain broad domains that Thomas Schäfer; Peter Sedlmeier (2011) have pointed out. The extent to which these domains have an impact on people's behavior and attitudes is a topic of study by researchers worldwide.

1.1 Literature review

This study comprises a brief understanding of the causes of different music preferences in individuals and of the impact these preferences have on their attitudes and behavior. Data from several research studies have been mentioned in the background; this shall be used to get a better understanding of the primary data that will be extracted in this research.

a. Understanding the underlying causes of Music preferences.

Thomas Schäfer and Peter Sedlmeier (2009) it's the ubiquitous nature of music that plays a role in the impact it creates on people's behavior and emotional experience. This is what makes music an interesting phenomenon for psychological investigation. The question regarding the underlying causes behind these preferences can only be answered with the help of a detailed analysis of data that is gathered. It is safe to assume that individuals face a variety of problems in their day-to-day life, and those kinds of musical pieces which resonate with the ideologies, beliefs, problems, and needs of these people are primarily going to be the ones that they are more inclined to listen to. A more detailed understanding of the cognitive and emotional factors behind music preference can help answer the same question more elaborately. Moreover, a dive into the evolutionary foundation of music along with the empirical findings of today's data can help draw correlations and answer several questions about musical preferences.

There are two main models which describe the nature of music preference. The first model was described by Leblanc (1982), according to him; the preference for any kind of music depends on A. input information and B. Characteristics of the listener. Input information refers to the complexity of the music along with its acoustic properties, whereas, the characteristics of the listener refer to personality, gender group, ethnic group, or music ability. The input characteristics are known to interact with one another and be filtered by the characteristics of the listener which leads to the decision of the listener choosing to listen to a piece of music. However, this model is obsolete because it doesn't answer the question of why people start listening to music, and secondly, the possible functions of music are ignored. The second model of music given by Hargreaves, Miell, and McDonald (2005) states that the main focus is on people's response to music. It gives us a vague indication that the use of music might also have an impact on people's music preferences. This model also fails to answer the question of why one starts to listen to music.

Other than the models that have been given by researchers before, there are also cognitive and emotional factors that play a key role in determining the underlying causes behind certain musical preferences. A closer look at these factors provides a structure for understanding the nature of music preference. Firstly, certain cognitive factors like communication and self-reflection affected music preference. Music can help individuals express their identities, values, beliefs, hopes, and fears. Secondly, Music is also liked because it induces, expresses, or changes one's emotions. Thirdly, it plays an active role in physiological arousal and regulation of one's mood. Fourthly, Music can be used to express the identities of certain cultures, communities, and even nations. These factors put into perspective all the probable causes behind people's music tastes.

Miell and McDonald (2005) use the study done in this paper involving 53 students from Chemnitz University of Technology (43 females, 10 males) aged 18 to 37 years. They were asked to listen to seven pieces of music along with one which was their favorite. The seven music genres included Rock, Pop, rap, electro, classical, and folk/beat. For each piece, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire with a ten-point Likert scale. The questions were formulated to assess interesting factors like physiological arousal with questions like "This music activates me" and emotional use by questions like "This song puts me in a good mood". The order of these mood pieces was randomized across participants.

The results revealed that the most preferred was their taste which was followed by rock, pop, rap, electro, classic, and beat. A multiple regression analysis was calculated to calculate the

contribution of the six factors to the strength of music preference. The highest contributing factor that determined music preference was communication; this was followed closely by self-reflection. This can be viewed as a cognitive factor for listening to music. Arousal and activation, mood, and emotion were the next determinants that were responsible for music preference. Additionally, factors like repetition also played an important role in determining music preference. This is probably because of the feeling of familiarity that it provides to the listener. Lastly, culture is also an important determinant for music preference as it usually exposes the individual to a particular form of music from a young age.

Two studies conducted by Alinka E. Greasley, and Alexandra M. Lamont (2006) also give us valuable insight into the nature of music preference along with the underlying causes of the same. The first study provides information to find out how engaged people are with music and the different genres that they listen to. The method for the first study involved students of psychology from two universities in England. Out of the 120 students, 92 were females, 21 were male and 7 did not state Gender. These participants were given questionnaires with questions regarding the importance of music in their lives, how much music they own, and what kind of genres they listen to most. The scale in the questionnaire ranged from "Dislike very much" to "like very much" for questions that were based on enjoyment and it ranged from "not at all" to "extremely" for questions that were based on the importance of music.

The results of this study showed that those individuals who owned a high number of CDS also rated high on the important parameter of the same test. This was in contrast to those who didn't have a high number of CDS and plausibly didn't score much on the important parameter of the same test. Other findings reveal that the ratings for the enjoyment of music listening, the importance of music, and the amount of music owned were 4.62, 4.00, and 3.16, respectively. A large number of music styles were also listed where some participants mentioned one or two styles, whereas some participants mentioned several styles or genres of music.

The second study was more focused on exploring people's music preferences and how that plays a role in their listening behavior. The aim was also to identify those factors that are perceived to be important in shaping their music preferences. The method of this study involved 23 participants out of which 11 were female and 12 were male, some were personal acquaintances and some were through the messaging board on the University email server for participants who would be willing to talk about their music tastes, lastly, some were undergraduate students who had previously filled a questionnaire about their music preferences. The interview process took place at the homes of the participants primarily for two reasons. First, the nature of the questions required them to have access to their music collection, and second, it helped in the thorough

investigation of participants as it required them to play these tracks and point out those bits which are key in influencing their music preference. The interview involved broad questions about the nature of people's music taste over some time, the main genres of one's music collection, and more specific questions about the times when an individual decides to listen to an album, or what makes one decide to a particular track on.

The results of this test reveal a great deal about factors like familiarity, mood regulation, physiological arousal, conscious awareness and engagement, fluctuation in preferences, and technological factors. These factors play an avid role in determining the dynamic nature of an individual's music preference

b. The impact of music on Attitude, Behaviour, and perspectives.

Music as a form of art has several layers to it, these range from the acoustic properties of the track to the production quality, vocals, and lyrics along with their interpretations. The art form is so advanced that even instrumental pieces without any lyrics convey strong meanings. The layers add several complications to studying the impact of music in a quantifiable method. A study by Hallam (2010) analyzed the impact of music on language development, literacy, and measures of intelligence, self-confidence, concentration, fine motor coordination, creativity, emotional sensitivity, social skills, teamwork, and self-discipline. The research used advanced technology to study brain activity, in addition to quantitative and qualitative factors that are responsible for the impact of music.

An active level of engagement with music can potentially induce cortical reorganization. This may involve functional changes in the way in which the brain processes information. If this cortical reorganization happens early in development, then the alterations within the brain may become hardwired and produce permanent changes in the way information is processed. The brain is known to develop at a faster rate if the time and exposure to the music are for a longer period. The extent to which the musical engagement takes place along with its nature is one of the main factors that determine the extent to which the skills can transfer to other areas. According to the paper, as we engage in musical activities over a long period, permanent changes take place in the brain. These changes show not only what we have learned through musical engagement but also how we have learned it. They will also influence the extent to which the developed skills are translated into other activities.

Music is known to have a positive impact on listening skills in younger individuals and also those with learning difficulties. The processing ability is very similar for speech as well as music,

this helps improve the perception of language and can ultimately impact reading. Musical abilities are known to sharpen the brain's early encoding of linguistic sound which leads to superior coding. This can also serve as a linguistic benefit of musical training. A study done by Flohr, Miller, and de Beus (2000), involved children from the age of 4 –

6 to get music training every day of the week for 25 minutes, these children were compared with the control group and had higher levels of cognitive processing. Another study by Wong, Skoe, Russo, Dees, & Kraus, (2007) tells us that there is a positive correlation between the quality of sensory encoding and the level of music training within individuals.

A connection can also be drawn between mathematical ability and music. The correlation between the two has only provided mixed results. The evidence suggests that high musical engagement can improve mathematical performance but the kind of music training and the length of time required is not understood completely.

The impact of Music on intellectual development can be demonstrated by the studies done by (Schellenberg, 2004) who concluded that rhythmic training is important for the development of temporal cognition and mathematics, whereas an enhanced perceptual skill in melody and pitch increases language development.

Creativity and its development are more dependent on the type of musical engagement. Work by Koutsoupidou and Hargreaves (2009) reveals that those individuals who had opportunities in musical improvisation had higher levels of extensiveness, flexibility, originality, and syntax. The improvisation activities supported the development of creative thinking as opposed to those who had didactic teaching.

Lastly, Music plays an avid role in social and personal development. Music plays a major role to determine self-identity in adolescence. The ability to relate to certain forms helps them decide their own identity which involves choices regarding their clothes, attitudes, and other important things.

1.2

Methodology

The research that will take place will be a qualitative analysis. The methodology that shall be used for this research is going to be the interview method. A planned set of elaborate questions are going to be asked to a small but diverse group of music listeners. The questions shall range from song and genre selection to its elaborate reason and its impact. The answers will be collated and used to make certain inferences about the same topic. A focus group of individuals from the age group of 14 to 22 shall be selected; they shall also be asked to discuss the answer to their

questions with each other. This data derived from this discussion shall be used for making inferences in the following research. The inferences shall be based on my interpretation of the data that is gathered. Since multiple people are going to be a part of this focus group, the data will be diverse. This data will provide us with points of information on the causes and the impact of music; this shall be useful in making the inferences.

1.3 Research questions

This paper attempts to get a deeper understanding of the main underlying causes that make people inclined to their respective music genres. Moreover, it also assesses the long-term impact of listening to and consuming music of different genres on specifically the attitude and behavior of people.

1.4 Rationale

I am undertaking this project to gain a better understanding of musical preferences and their simultaneous impact. It is of extreme importance to know the impact of music since it is a universally used medium for leisure, entertainment, and artistic expression. A dive into these concepts shall help me gain valuable insights into the hows and whys of music consumption. The causes behind different musical inclinations reveal a good amount of information on the activity of music consumption and its implications on the human psyche.

1.5

Sample Involved

The sample that has been used for this research project is a group of 5 individuals ranging from the age of 14 to 22. All of these individuals were inclined to the music of different genres and consumed it daily. Their opinions and experiences were gathered for drawing inferences.

1.6 Limitations

There are a series of limitations that are present in this research project. To begin with, there's an element of conformity that may be present when dealing with a focus group. This is highly probable since a lot of the individuals are going to be interacting together. Secondly, the research is only going to be based on people's interpretation of what they feel about music, therefore, some element of subjectivity is evident in the research project. Thirdly, the number of people in the focus group is small and the data gathered from them cannot be generalized to

everyone. Lastly, there is always a chance of dishonesty by the participants of the focus group; this may distort the data that has been collected.

1.7 Research Gap

The existing literature is complete in the sense of pinpointing the causes and impacts of musical preferences. However, it fails to take into consideration the degree to which it impacts other people, drawing correlational study with facets of an individual's personality to make definitive claims and the nature of different genres and their impact as a culture on the individuals' lifestyles.

1.8

Analysis of data

Results and Discussion

The data obtained for this research has been through the focus group interview. The procedure involved getting five music listeners and an unbiased individual on a zoom call. They were then interviewed on topics around the General causes and effects of music. All of the questions were open-ended, and the participants were encouraged to participate in the discussion with their opinion and to discuss amongst themselves any disagreements/agreements that they had. The interview went on about for 90 minutes and was extremely insightful on the topic of the main causes and effects of music. The Interview was divided into two main subsections; these were the cause behind musical preferences and second, the effects and influence of the same on the lives of people. A lot of the answers were very detailed specifically pointing toward certain causes and effects, the co-incision to the data obtained from previous literature was also extremely useful in elaborately analyzing this data.

A careful analysis of this data tells us the following things about the causes and effects of musical preferences and consumption.

A. Results

The focus group interview involved five participants. These were:

Participant one stated that his preferred genre was EDM.

Participant two stated his preferred genre was Hip/hop.

Participants Three and Four stated that their preferred genre was Rock.

Participant Five stated that his preferred genre was pop.

B. Discussion

a. Causes of musical preferences

A careful analysis of the answers received in the focus group reveals a good deal of information about the main causes behind certain music preferences. The first question that was asked to the members of the focus group was about their favorite genres, tracks, and what makes them like that track, or those kinds of tracks. This was asked to get a general idea of the individual's preference, and to understand in detail the reason as to why the individual listens to a particular kind of track.

Three of the main causes behind musical preferences that can be derived from the focus group are

1. Role of instrumentals, and the sound of the music toward the physiological arousal

Many of the participants of the focus group interview stated that they like the sound of the music which is what inclines them to listen to the track. According to the majority of the participants in the focus group, the technical aspect of the music is something that is known to stimulate them physiologically. The question of what gets them physiologically aroused from a track depends from individual to individual. To cite an example, one of the participants stated that his favorite genre of music was Electronic Dance Music/ French house. The Beats per minute as per this participant should be at a rate that is easy to dance to, or drive to and in general helps him in his daily course of life. Additionally, he mentioned that the music video of the song is what made him also really like it. A correlation drawn to the research paper by Leblanc (1982) can be effectively put into use in this particular scenario. As per the paper, the preference for any kind of music depends on the input information and the characteristics of the listener. As per my interpretation, this participant is an outgoing individual who is extroverted, perhaps, this could be the reason why he finds the connection in the BPM of a particular track along with the lifestyle that the individual has. This interpretation can be further supported by the participant's claim that he likes that form of music because it blends along with the energy and helps him dance, drive or engage in any habit in his pattern of life. Another claim that was made by this participant was that he mostly prefers those kinds of tracks where lyrics aren't needed. This can be interpreted as a cause-based preference that relies more on the rhythm and drums of the song as it provides an individual with an element of pattern to go about his daily life.

The conclusion that can be drawn based on the literature mentioned before can be that the rhythm of the track provides the listener with some sort of direction and clarity of thoughts. It also helps him feel emotionally elated at any point in time, which further motivates him to

listen to his kind of music. it is also known to be influenced by emotional and behavioral factors that play a key role. Lastly, the question of why an individual listens to music a repeated number of times can be answered by using the consequence argument as described by (Leblanc, 1982). According to him, when a person enjoys listening to a musical piece for the first time, there is a high chance that he wants to experience this physiological arousal again; this is what motivates that individual to continue listening to music over a repeated number of times.

Another participant who reported to have liked Hip-hop as a genre provided similar examples about the instrumental aspect of Hip-hop music which plays a role in physiological arousal and is a key determinant when it comes to his natural music selection. He mentioned that he was a producer and that initially he was inclined to the genre because of the way the samples had been remastered in the genre. Moreover, he stated that he liked the fact that the nostalgic element of the initial samples he had heard were edited creatively, which lead to the production of a track of another genre altogether. He mentioned that the delivery of the vocals in Hip-hop songs was something that he enjoyed too, this was because he found it melodious. Another determinant that was key in deciding his music taste was arousal and activation. Hip-hop as a form of music helped him feel activated and aroused in an emotional sense. This was a factor of lyrics plus the instruments that were present in the track. He stated that he was inclined towards the sound of the music. Hip-hop as a genre revolves around a rhythm of drums and patterns of melodies that are present in the instrumental, this is what the participant enjoyed.

2. Exposure, Influence, and Lyricism.

Another major cause that emerged while studying the causes behind certain music inclinations was the role of exposure and influence. Individuals who are known to have been exposed to a particular art form from a young age tend to acquire a taste for the same with time. The influence of the culture also plays a major role in determining their musical preferences. One of the participants mentioned that she is inclined to rock as a genre because of how she is influenced by the culture and her exposure from a young age. To explain with more clarity, she cited the example of a song by Taylor Swift (a pop artist) and mentioned that it was the lyrics of the track that resonated with her and made her more inclined towards the track, additionally, she also mentioned that it was the acoustic properties in the delivery of Taylor Swifts voice is what made her enjoy the music. These causes can be closely related to the paper by Hargreaves, Miele, and McDonald (2005) wherein the main determinants behind causes of music preferences were mentioned. There were several factors like communication, which refers to the meaning of the lyrics that have been delivered in the track. The paper proposes that the meaning of the lyrics

can only invoke an individual to like a track provided it resonates with their beliefs, ideologies, and thoughts. The participant mentioned that the track by Taylor swift is more close to alternate and indie rather than pop which also makes her like it more.

As per the same research paper, repetition as a factor is also crucial to an individual who likes any kind of track. The participant may be more exposed to genres like alternate and indie from a young age. This may have provided a level of familiarity to the listener and made her inclined to this kind of track. She mentioned that her favorite genre is rock because she is influenced by the culture that the genre propagates. This tendency to emulate something that an individual admires becomes a key factor in choosing to listen to a genre of music. Arousal and activation are other key factors that determine an individual's music choice. The participant mentioned that she is moved by good instrumental music, this can be attributed as one of the factors behind which she chooses to pick a song with good instrumental pieces. The participant was heavily influenced by the rock culture that it had inculcated an acquired taste for that kind of music. She seemed well versed with the theme of music that is propagated in rock. A culmination of these factors provides the participant with a natural inclination towards rock, not only as a form of music but also as a culture with its ideals. This influence further motivates the listener to hear rock music and to build on her acquired taste through the determinant of arousal and repetition. Another participant mentioned that he was really into lyricism, he mentions that the lyrics are something that he subconsciously notices about the song. Although he mentioned that the lyrics have to be relevant to his ideologies and feelings, he also stated that the lyrics can also be different and that he's open to experiencing the message that the song contains. This can be related to the research paper by Hargreaves, Miell, and McDonald (2005) which states the different determinants of music preference. As per the paper, factors like communication, which are lyrics, are one of the most important determinants for an individual to like a musical piece. This is also shown in the participant's example, where he mentions that he likes the content and rhyme scheme of the songs in the particular genre.

3. Role of emotions

One of the major determinants of the causes behind an individual's music preference is the emotional state of mind of that individual. This plays a key role in determining what kind of music the person listens to. One of the participants stated that The reasons for liking the majority of the tracks mostly stemmed from his emotional state of mind. He elaborated on this by stating that, whenever he feels any emotion, he uses music as a tool to feel that emotion more intensively. He cited an example stating that when he receives a bad grade on any exam,

he feels sad, and to truly utilize his emotions he listens to those kinds of songs that emote the feeling of sadness. The participant stated that it also helps him feel better when he is already happy, which is when upbeat music makes him feel elevated, jovial, and like dancing. Moreover, he mentioned that he doesn't have a set playlist on his phone and usually listens to whatever songs come on the radio. A close comparison can be made to the research paper written by Alinka E. Greasley, and Alexandra M. Lamont (2006) who conducted a study that stated that those individuals who had a higher number of musical Compact Discs scored high on the important parameter of the test which was made to analyze the role of music. The participant explicitly mentioned that later in the interview that music doesn't play as important a role in his life as he does. The theory, therefore, holds for this specific instance. Another important factor of co-incision can be derived from the paper by Hargreaves, Miell, and McDonald (2005) which states the role of mood and emotion as an important determinant of music preference. Music, through its sound and lyrics, is supposed to activate the limbic system of an individual's brain and help them feel in accordance with the type of song there is; this activation is majorly responsible for an individual's choice to select any kind of track that there is. The paper states that mood and emotion are generally not as important a determiner in contrast to factors like arousal and activation, and communication. The study, however, was done over a small sample of people and the participant happens to be one of those individuals for whom mood and emotion play a major role in music preference. Moreover, one can also argue that it is through the communication aspect of the song that an individual activates his emotions through this inference; we can conclude that although all of the factors play an avid role in musical preference, their importance differs from person to person. Emotion as an important determiner was also mentioned by another participant when he stated that another factor that was responsible for the track was the involvement of emotion; the participant later mentioned that he picks a song based on the emotion that he is feeling. He mentions that he picks those songs which help him feel the emotion that he is feeling in a more elaborated sense. Additionally, he mentions that sometimes he also plays with this rule and plays those tracks to put him in a different mood than what he is feeling at the moment. These factors, therefore, are key determiners in understanding what plays a role in any kind of musical preference.

The majority of the individuals within the focus group more or less agreed with what this participant had to say although, they mentioned that the role of mood is present but not as significant when it comes to determining what kind of music they listen to.

b. Impact of Individuals music preference

The impact of different musical preferences on the attitudes and behavior of the participants was also spoken about elaborately in the focus group interview. The participants were asked about their opinion on the impact of music on themselves. Although the answers were different for listeners of different genres, the process behind the impact was almost the same for all of the participants.

1. Impact on the attitudes of the listeners

Music as a concept has impacted individuals since times immemorial. From the content of the lyrics to the melodies used in the instrumental, every single aspect is known to have some sort of impact on the attitudes and behaviors of individuals.

The focus group interview involved several explanations regarding the influence of music on their attitudes. One of the participants mentioned that consuming music within the genre of hip-hop on a deeper level has also molded his speech. He elaborated on this by stating that if he is among his friends and he feels the need to state if something is true, he would rather use the phrase “no cap” which is slang for the same terminology. He justified this by saying that it’s not a surface-level thing that he says to look or sound like someone that he isn’t, but it is rather something that he feels is a natural reaction because he is so influenced by hip hop as a culture. Hip-hop propagates the idea of being calm, collected, and easy-going, he mentions that because of listening to the genre for a long time, he is calm in most situations and refers to the term “chill” in scenarios that usually rile up others. The reason for him having a composed attitude because of Hip-hop music is something that cannot be empirically validated. However, the state of mind as influenced by the hip-hop culture is one thing that can be relied upon. He also states the example of a rapper known as “6ix9ine” who was known for complaining about all of his other friends so that he reduces the time of his sentence in prison. This was not looked at favorably by other hip-hop artists as it was considered what is known as “Snitching” which refers to complaining. The participant thereby mentioned that as a culture it has also helped him imbibe certain values in his own life. He mentions the idea that hip-hop music always looks down on those who lie, cheat or run away from their responsibilities. Similarly, it influences him to extent that he avoids doing all those things that are looked down upon by the culture. Another participant mentioned that, he listens to several genres and that somehow puts him in a genre-specific state of mind. To get a better understanding, he mentioned that if he listens to a genre like hip-hop for

a set period, he has a phase where he subscribes to the ideas that are propagated in the same genre. This entails that he dresses like hip-hop artists, attends parties where that kind of music is played, and even talks to his friends in a similar manner. When the participant was asked about this level of influence, he stated that it was surface level and that it changes with time as he listens to newer genres. This temporary change in his attitude and choices reveal how music impacts the attitude of certain individuals. Another participant mentioned it was similar for her when it comes to rock music, she has been influenced by rock as a culture and tended to emulate the attitudes that rock propagates in their genre. The lyrical content of these songs has a few recurring ideas that the participant claimed to have inhibited with years of consumption. One of the participants reported that rock music has a heavy influence on her mood, she stated that the more she is invested in the track, the more it can affect her mood. This can be correlated to the paper by Wells(1985) which spoke about the definite impact of music on the mental state and moods of different individuals.

2. Impact on the behaviour of individuals.

Music is known to impact not only the attitude but also the actions and choices that individuals make over some time. The attitude is also known to translate into actions over a set period. The majority of the focus group was heavily influenced by the respective genres and the ideas that they propagate. One of the participants mentioned that his speech usually has slang terms that are derived from hip hop, he also dresses in the conventional form of hip hop artists because of how influenced he is by the genre in its entirety. He mentions that when he buys items of clothing for himself, he looks for those who help him emulate the style of hip-hop artists. These range from the kind of shoes he wears to the caps that he puts on, he also stated that his body language is similar to that of the dancers within the hip-hop community. The influence that he's had has impacted the choices that he makes while dressing, in his speech, in his body language, and in the actions that he takes in his everyday life. He mentioned that he made music as well, and because he was so inspired by the hip-hop culture, he wrote his lyrics regularly and put them over instrumentals to make music. Moreover, he stated that Hip-hop culture has glorified the usage of vices like marijuana, which has influenced him into consuming drugs like marijuana. This reveals that it can also be dangerous to get influenced by the harmful and addictive habits that the Hip-hop culture propagates.

Another participant stated that she has a lot of piercings on her body, which is a choice and a product of the influence of Rock music. She stated that piercings were something that she got because of the kind of music that she listens to. Another participant mentioned that she had phases in her life where she had a different style of hair, makeup, and clothing sense because of

her being inspired by sub-genre within rock. She also stated that it was the genre that inspired her to buy an acoustic guitar to make music of her own. She stated that she started making music that was closely related to the elements of rock only because she enjoyed practicing the art form, but somewhere down the line she enjoyed the process so much that it became a part of her. Her inclination toward rock music also impacted a part of her speech which had slang that was usually propagated within the rock culture. She mentioned that despite the sound of the genre evolving with time, she has still made an effort to listen to older songs, and based on that she has altered her personality. Due to the standard set of ideas, heavy consumption of the genre inevitably molds her perspective into one that is similar to rock culture.

3. Degree of Impact

Although music is known to impact everybody at a particular level, the degree to which an individual is impacted by music differs from person to person. One of the participants mentioned that music doesn't have that much of an impact on him. He elaborated by stating that for him music is just like any other object and he can't let another object influence his life changes. He mentioned that he was responsible for his actions and that he cannot let anything else alter that. Having said that, he also mentioned that it does help him marinate in his own emotions, or make him feel better when he is already happy. Through this, it can be inferred that music does not impact every individual with the level of magnitude; the impact itself depends on several key determinants like inclination, influence, preferences, and others.

1.9 Conclusion

Music as an art form has several layers to it and an unimaginable number of perspectives towards understanding it. The question of what determines an individual to be inclined to a track or a genre does not have a concrete answer. The numerous amounts of reasons vary from individual to individual and work for them in their own ways. With that being said factors like, instrumentals, lyricism, emotions, arousal and activation, and approval are the main players which decide if an individual is going to enjoy a track. When speaking of genres, the category of reasons opens up broader possibilities. These reasons stem from influence, culture, and various other factors that could permanently alter an individual's musical taste. The impact of music also has a lot to do with how an individual perceives the tracks, of course, there are factors like the importance of music, and susceptibility to influence by individuals but there is no set pattern in which it impacts every individual. It is known to change the lifestyle, attitudes, perspectives, speech, and even way of dressing of individuals but at the same time is also known

to not have any impact on certain other individuals. Through, this we can conclude music by itself is a very dynamic concept that caters to the complications of individual personality in its unique way.

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THE POTENT OF EMBEDDED MARKETING: A STUDY OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT AS A MARKETING TECHNIQUE IN CONTEXT OF PERSONAL CONSUMERISM IN INDIA¹

Abstract

This research paper studies how product placements in movies impact the consumer habits of individuals in India. This study's central question is whether product placement in movies affects individual consumerism in India or not. The study also aimed to study the ethical implications of advertising through product placement in movies. A questionnaire was used as the primary source of data collection, and a secondary source of literature analysis was also used. The questionnaire was primarily qualitative, and it was filled by 111 respondents living in different parts of India. The study concludes that product placements affect consumerism patterns on an individual level in India. Furthermore, most respondents believe that product placement in movies is an ethical way to advertise a product.

Keywords: Product placement, embedded marketing, consumer habits, ethics, advertising

Producing movies is a financial investment of heavy endeavour, and product placements help cover a part of these costs. It is observed that the number of product placements in movies is increasing rapidly. The reason behind this could be the recent popularity gained by OTT services that have led to the reduction of advertisements shown in intervals during a traditional T.V. viewing experience. These product placements are incorporated in a rather subtle manner. Product placements in movies are a more inconspicuous way of advertising a product than commercials being played in-between movies. One can observe the significant impact of this process on the product consumption of the viewers. Viewers unknowingly and subconsciously tend to be influenced by what they see on their screens. Hence, their wants may be also influenced by what they see in movies. Many products have seen a surge in sales after being placed in popular movies.

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It is also important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a boom in the online shopping. As many physical and outdoor activities were restricted, most people had no other option left than to be indoors and binge watch movies for recreation. Thus, this study explores how product placements in movies have impacted the personal consumption of the common people and how media and, in particular, movies are boosting the sales of companies.

The product placement market in the U.S. is the largest globally, and its estimated revenue was 3.7 billion in 2008 (Gaille, 2017). It is found that the popularity of a brand increases by 20% after being included in product placement in a movie (Gaille, 2017). Product placements cover a considerable part of the cost required to make a film in certain cases. "For example, a James Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, raised more than \$100 million from nine corporate sponsors – Smirnoff, Heineken, Avis, Ericsson, Gateway, BMW, Brioni, Omega, and Visa – through product placement" (Cha, 2016). The movie *E.T.* released in 1982, was one of the biggest blockbusters of all time, and Hershey had included their *Reece's Pieces* in the movie, which led to a 65% increase in their profits in just a year (Gaille, 2017). Thus, the product placement market is booming and is an intelligent marketing strategy.

Factors Affecting Efficacy of Product Placements

This study defines product placement as a form of advertisement in which different products are promoted by their respective companies by incorporating them in movies and the plot of the movies. Further, while discussing OTT platforms, this study refers to over the top media services, online streaming websites that provide entertainment.

Product placement is a form of advertisement where a product or brand is advertised by involving it in the content of a movie or a video game. There are three ways of placing products in movies - i) by including a visual representation of the product, ii) by including the product itself in the content of the movie, and iii) by including the brand or product name in the dialogues of the movie (Kumar, 2017). Product placements are also a more effective method to promote a product since it is subtle, and people cannot skip the promotion as it is not a stand-alone commercial. Product placements are an effective form of advertisement since people tend to be much more involved in movies as they invest time and money in deciding which movie to watch and where to watch it. However, a study shows that people who concentrate more on a movie tend to miss a more significant number of brand placements than those who do not concentrate on a movie to such an extent (Nelson & Devanathan, 2006). Movies also tend to reach a large population of people, as seen with movies such as *Terminator*

II that have been viewed by millions of people (D'Astous & Chartier, 2000). The efficacy of the product placement also increases with how well planned the film's content is and how the content interacts with the product. If the product is well integrated into the movie, then its efficacy may rise. Brand awareness can also be brought about by placing a product with the movie's protagonist (D'Astous & Chartier, 2000).

The costs of making a movie have increased rapidly, and hence, filmmakers are trying to find as much funding as possible to produce their respective films. Due to this funds requirement, product placements are becoming more popular as they provide the required financial aid. This financial help can be provided in the form of fees paid by a brand for including the product or by providing materials required for making the film. A study performed in the article "The Evolution of Product Placements in Hollywood Cinema: Embedding High-Involvement "Heroic" Brand Images" found that the leading products were "automobiles (21% of all placements), beer (14%), and soda (11%), with Coca-Cola the overall brand leader" (Galician & Bourdeau, 2004).

Relationship between the Genre of the Movie and Product Placements

While choosing movies to place products in, it is important for companies to perform a thorough analysis of which genre of movies is the most suitable for product placements. The genres of the movies decide what content will be displayed, and according to the content, companies must decide which products can be associated with the content. The success of advertisements depends on the genre of the movie (Cha, 2016). It is found that comedy as a genre has higher chances of successfully promoting a brand or product (Cha, 2016). Comedy movies promote the association of positive feelings with a brand. "An important implication here is that humour may benefit non-conventional marketing communication as well" (Chan et al., 2016). However, on the other hand, companies refrain from placing products in horror or action movies since it is believed that certain scenes from the movie might be too emotional or negative in nature which may indirectly associate negative feelings with the product placed in these movies. This negative association may cause a decrease in sales. However, it is interesting to note that a study performed by Galician & Bourdeau in 2004 suggested that the products placed in horror or violent movies such as *Scream 2* observed positive responses to the products (Galician & Bourdeau, 2004). Based on this literature, I suggest that the film's popularity matters more than the genre of the film and that a popular film with a negative aspect may be an excellent opportunity to place products based on popularity.

Ethics Revolving Around Product Placement in Films

Gould, Gupta, and Grabner-Kräuter, while engaging with the topic of product placement in films in detail, discuss the effectiveness of product placements and the ethical view of this kind of advertisement. The study elaborates on the effect of product placement in movies across nations. They argue that the popularity of a product or brand depends upon the character it is associated with. Generally, the ethical concerns that arise with this kind of publicity tend to emerge because of the method used. Product placement is a very subtle way of advertising a brand. Hence, people may find it unethical that the paid factor of this promotion is not blatantly disclosed to the viewers. Products that cannot be advertised due to ethical concerns, such as cigarettes, receive publicity when placed in movies even if they are not paid promotions (Gould et al., 2000). This leads to a cause for concern. It is also interesting to note the difference in the efficacy of advertising across nations and cultures. The findings of Gould et al.' study proved that differences exist across countries and that this should be considered while product placements are made. The cultural differences amongst different countries also lead to varied preferences of people from various countries. The products differ in popularity in different countries, and particular products may not be available altogether in some parts of the world. Thus, a product placement advertising a product in a movie that is not available in certain countries would have no commercial value.

Nelson and McLeod discuss a significant but neglected subject, adolescents and their response to product placements in movies. Adolescents have impressionable minds and are easily influenced by what they see on their screens. Thus, high-end brands like Prada purposely place their products in movies meant for teenagers to implement a positive image of their products amongst adolescents. These companies are trying to develop loyalty towards the brand amongst the teens (Nelson & McLeod, 2005). These products cost a lot of money and are not affordable in any sense. This raises an ethical concern that questions whether it is morally correct to inculcate the wants of such expensive items and normalize the acquisition of these items amongst teenagers. The deceptive nature of product placements has earned a bad reputation, and many believe that this type of advertisement must be banned based on ethical concerns.

Unfavourable Outcomes of Obvious Placements

Chan, Lowe, and Petrovici discuss the adverse side effects of obvious product placement and its association with cognitive processing. When product placement is blatantly apparent in movies, it leads to viewers' negative responses. In such cases, there is a possibility that the viewers may remember these brands or products after the movie is over and may try to acquire more information regarding the placement. This leads to a spike in the viewer's curiosity, and after obtaining this information, the viewer may not think positively about the brand and may refrain from consuming their goods. Thus, the poor product placement will have no profitable outcomes, as seen from the discussion above. Prominent product placements may also disrupt the movie's flow, which will lead to the viewer being irritated. Hence, this unpleasant experience will create a negative image of the brand in the viewer's mind. However, Galician and Bourdeau mention that it is becoming a trend that products are no longer placed subtly in movies but are made evident to the viewers. Product placements look more like commercials in a movie than a part of the movie itself. These prominent placements are seen when a camera takes a close-up shot of the placement or focuses on the placement for too long. Directors are no longer trying to conceal the fact that a product has been promoted. This may lead to an unfavourable response from the audience.

The success of product placement also depends upon factors such as repetition and the product's distinctiveness (Homer, 2009). If a product is repeated throughout a film, then the chances of it being noticed are higher. However, it also makes this attempt seem a little desperate, and viewers may find that this repetition is unnecessary and disrupts the movie's plot. On the other hand, the product's placing in the movie plot has the power to either positively or negatively promote the product. If the product is too prominent and almost disturbing the movie, the audience may find the product placement annoying and associate negative emotions with the product. However, the product can be placed subtly, which will boost the popularity of the product or brand. It is noteworthy that obvious placements mentioned in dialogues in movies are considered more disturbing than visual representations of product placements (Homer, 2009). Thus, just advertising products for the sake of it without incorporating the products in the movie's storyline will prove to be non-beneficial.

Product Placements in Indian Cinema

Michelle R Nelson and Narayan Devanathan, while discussing product placements in the Indian context, suggest that very little research about Bollywood exists. India has a vibrant culture, and these cultural aspects also affect what people consume in India. Hence, their product placements are also driven by cultural preferences. Since Indians are collectivist in nature, their preferences depend upon the group they belong to. Due to the "globalization of media", both international and domestic brands are a part of the product placement phenomenon in Bollywood (Nelson & Devanathan, 2006). The study performed in the article mentioned above showed that only two brands out of the 11 brands placed in the chosen Bollywood film were Indian (Nelson & Devanathan, 2006). The large population of India provides a massive opportunity for product placements, and a majority of the people go to the cinema to watch a movie.

Research Gap

Detailed research has been performed in the past on product placements in movies. This detailed research provides a strong literary source of data. However, the majority of the research was performed before the Covid-19 Pandemic. Little to no research has been done during the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy of cinema and OTT. Hence, it is necessary to see how people's perspective has changed. With increased online shopping and increased screen time, personal consumerism may or may not have undergone a radical change.

This study aims to study the impact of product placements in movies on personal consumerism during the Covid-19 pandemic. It cannot be said with certainty that there has been a change in personal consumerism. This is the most critical research gap apparent while reviewing the literature on the topic under consideration. Another research gap that surfaced was contradicting arguments revolving around the genre of movies as a basis of decision making for potential product placements.

Methodology

Aim

The main aim of this research was to observe how product placements in movies affect consumerism on a personal level. The research aimed to determine whether consumerism is

positively affected by product placement in movies and whether consumers realize that their expenditure is being driven by what they see in movies. This study also questioned the ethics of using product placements in movies as an advertisement.

Objectives

The study's objective was to uncover whether and how movies impact consumer behaviour and promote business by propagating ideas through media portrayals. It further aimed to understand to what extent product placements incorporated in movies influence the viewer to buy these products. Unravelling the association between events in movies and the purchase of these products was one of the objectives of this research. This study tried to understand consumers' attitude towards products and how it is being shaped by the placement of these products in popular movies. In order to understand this research question - Does product placement in movies affect personal consumption in urban India - was chosen.

Data Collection Procedure

This research collected data for its observations through a primary survey performed through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was circulated to people between 18 and 50 as these people were more appropriate respondents for this research. The survey was carried out in March and April 2021. A diverse set of respondents were chosen for this study so that the answers would be diverse, giving a more holistic view of the topic. This study benefited from a primarily qualitative approach as the main aim was to understand the qualitative impact on a consumer's attitude. Thus, this research attempted to understand how product placement changes a person's economic perspective. A secondary literature survey of scholarly texts was also used as a secondary source of data in addition to the literature review. The questionnaire and the literature survey together provided key observations that helped answer the research questions of this study.

Data Analysis and Results

The questionnaire was circulated amongst people above the age of 18. Responses from 111 respondents were collected via the questionnaire. This survey was conducted in March and April 2021. The first section of the questionnaire dealt with the demographics of the subjects. While the age range of the respondents was diverse from ages ranging from 18 to 56 and above, the majority of respondents were between the ages of 18 to 25 (n=32). Most of them live in Pune and Mumbai. The number of female subjects (n= 66) was more than the number of male

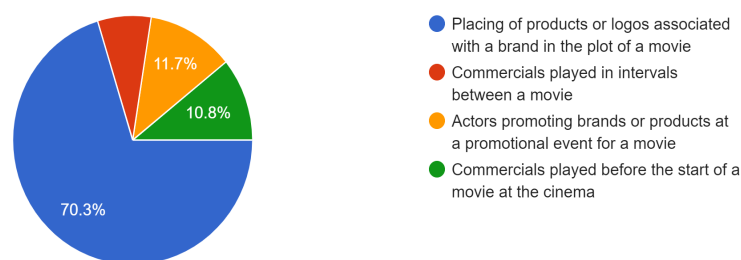
subjects (n= 45). Out of 111 respondents, 41% (n=46) were employed, 26.1 % (n= 29) were students and 12.6 %, (n=14) were homemakers and 5.4% (n=6) were retired. Thus, a majority of respondents have a source of income.

The next section of the questionnaire attempted to find answers to one of the two main questions of the questionnaire revolving around the impact of product placement on personal consumerism. The first question under this section tried to find out the understanding of the term "product placement" from the perspective of the subjects. This question had multiple choices, and the respondents could only select one option, and only one was the correct choice according to the economically accepted meaning of product placement.

Figure 1

Understanding of the Term 'Product Placement' from the Perspective of Respondents

According to you, what does product placement in movies refer to?
111 responses



Out of the four choices, the correct definition of product placement was "Placing of products or logos associated with a brand in the plot of a movie". According to Figure 1, most respondents (n=78) knew the correct definition of product placement. This question was added to ensure that the respondents knew what the theme of the paper revolves around so that their responses could be considered credible while analyzing data. However, not all respondents knew what product placement stands for, and they may have confused it with the other options.

For an advertisement to be successful, brands placed in a movie must be easy to identify. If they are easily identifiable, there is a higher chance that viewers may notice them, leading to higher sales. Upon being asked if they were quick to identify a brand placed in a movie, the majority of respondents (n=58) answered yes. However, only a minority of people (n=17) said that they would be interested in buying a product after seeing its placement in a movie. It is noteworthy that around 23 people have bought products after seeing them in a movie. In the following question, they were asked if a product associated with their favourite

actor would influence them to buy the products themselves. The results showed that the association with their favourite actor had no impact on their consumerism.

The following few questions were used to cross-check whether the empirical consumer behaviour of the respondents lined up with what they thought the impact of product placement would be on their purchasing behaviour. The subjects were asked whether they noticed the placement of “Make My Trip” in *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (2013), as seen in figure 2, and it was found that a majority (n=52) of them noticed the placement.

Figure 2

Product Placement of Make My Trip in Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani (2013)

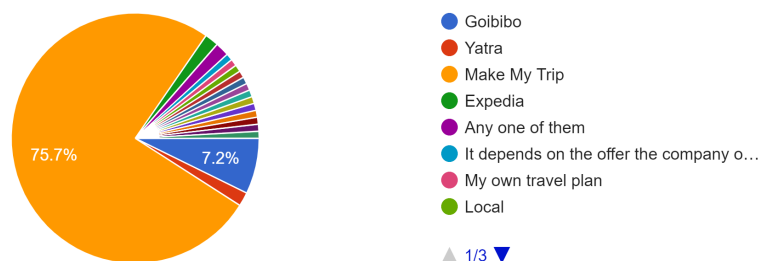


Next was a follow-up question to the previous one where the subjects were made to select one website for booking hotels online to see whether the previous placement impacted their preferences. Figure 3 shows that the product placement influenced the preferences of most respondents (n=84) as they chose to Make My Trip as the preferred website to make hotel bookings.

Figure 3

Impact of Product Placement on Preferences of Respondents

After seeing this placement, which website are you most likely to use for making travel bookings?
111 responses



Further, the respondents were asked whether or not they purchased imported products online. The answers were used to aid the next question that inquired whether the respondents would purchase any imported products after seeing their placements in Hollywood movies.

Imported goods refer to the products that are not available in India and have to be shipped from another country and may have heavy taxes or shipping costs attached to them. Although most (n= 58) bought imported goods online, only 12.6% (n=14) of the respondents agreed that they were likely to buy imported goods after seeing their placements in Hollywood movies.

The next section attempted to understand the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on product placement and personal consumerism. The research gap that arose after reviewing existing literature on product placement discusses that most studies mentioned above were conducted before the pandemic. Thus, there is a scope to observe changes in the data analyzed during and after the pandemic compared to the data collected in pre-Covid times. As all activities were limited to the boundaries of our homes, most people have been spending all their time in their houses. Due to the lack of recreational activities available inside houses, this study hypothesized that people's engagement with movies may have increased as well. The respondents were asked whether their viewing habits had changed during the lockdown period. According to their answers, there was quite a change in the number of movies the respondents viewed. It was found that a majority of respondents (n=65) noticed that they were watching more movies than they did before the pandemic started. It is noteworthy that many respondents (n=24) mentioned that they had been watching fewer movies than they did before.

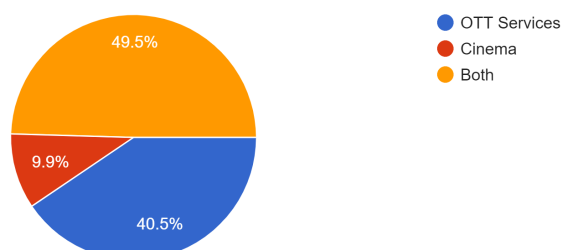
The next question (refer to figure 4) inquired whether viewers liked using OTT streaming services to watch movies or prefer going to the cinema. The responses showed that a majority (n=55) of viewers preferred both the means of viewing, but the number of viewers (n=45) who preferred OTT services over a Cinema viewing experience was much higher than those who preferred watching movies at the cinema (n=11).

Figure 4

Preferences of Viewers Regarding Means of Viewing

Do you prefer watching movies on OTT services such as Netflix/Amazon Prime Video/Hotstar or at the Cinema?

111 responses



The online shopping expenditure of viewers has also seen an increase during the pandemic. When asked whether the viewers had purchased any products they saw online in a movie during the covid-19 pandemic, only five replied that they had purchased products after seeing their placements. The follow-up question asked for details of the products that were bought, and it was found that two out of five respondents bought cleansing products.

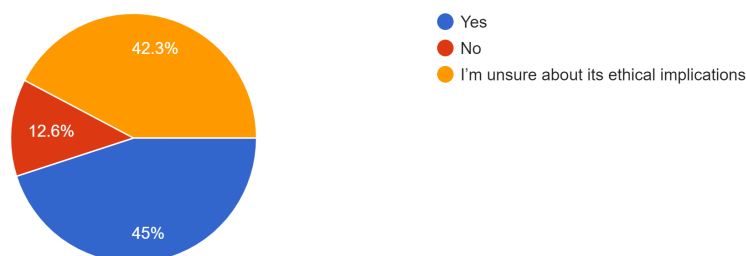
The last section of the questionnaire tests the effectiveness of product placements as a form of advertisement. This section also briefly inquires about the ethics of product placement in movies. The ethics of this form of advertising have been questioned repeatedly since it is a subtle way of marketing. According to the literature review, certain products such as cigarettes cannot be advertised because of ethics, but they are used in movies. This raises marketing concerns. The respondents were asked whether they believe that product placement in movies is ethical advertising.

Figure 5

Viewer's Perspective on the Ethics of Product Placement as a Way of Marketing

Do you think product placement in movies is an ethical way to advertise products?

111 responses



According to figure 5, most respondents (n=50) believed that it was ethical to advertise products in movies through product placements. However, many respondents (n=47) were not sure about the ethical implications of product placements.

To judge the effectiveness of product placements in movies, it is essential to understand viewers' preference. After being asked if they would prefer product placement over other ways of advertisement, a majority of respondents (n=75) answered that yes, they would prefer it. This was followed up with another question tracing their preferences, where they were made to choose between a list of different ways of advertising. Respondents were asked to select any three, and they could also write any of their preferences that were not listed as an option. According to figure 6, the most popular choices of advertisements were - i) Advertisements in newspapers (n=54) and ii) Advertisement posts on social media (n=49). Commercials played

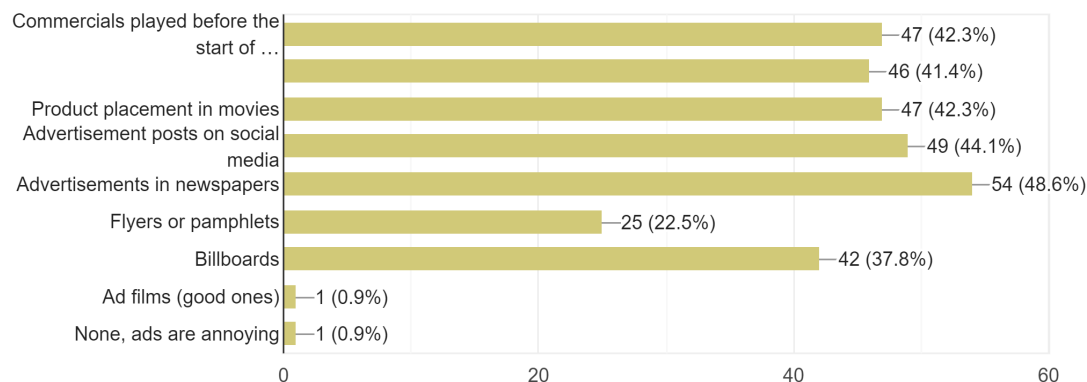
before starting a movie at a cinema (n=47) and Product placement in movies (n=47) tied for the third most popular choice of advertisements.

Figure 6

Preferences of Viewers Regarding Different Ways of Advertising

Which of the following means of advertisement would you prefer? (Select multiple where they apply - up to three choices)

111 responses



Lastly, an optional descriptive question was presented in the questionnaire that asked the subjects to provide advice for any marketers that could help them advertise their products better. Out of 111 respondents, 58 answered this question. It was found that most viewers advised that the advertisements should be genuine about the quality and specifications of the products. They also answered that the advertisements must be short and precise, but they should not miss out on the entertaining aspect. The advertisements must not stray from the main genuine qualities of the products, and they should also highlight the need for the product. Most responses emphasized the importance of authenticity while advertising products.

Many respondents also provided advice for effective advertising through product placements. A majority of the subjects responded that product placements could be a great way of advertising products if done right. They advised that the products should be placed in a blatantly obvious manner in movies because this gets rid of the subtlety of the idea of product placements. This obviousness can have an opposite effect than desired and could lead to a negative brand image in the mind of the viewers.

Conclusion

This study delved into the impact of product placements on the personal consumerism habits of the viewers living in India. The research aimed not just to understand the impact but

also the ethical implications of product placement as a means of advertising. Two sources of data collection were used to answer the research question of how product placement in movies affects consumerism on an individual level in India. A detailed literature survey underlining a significant research gap was the secondary data source. It was found that a research gap arose from the limited studies conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, this gave rise to the need for this study. A primary survey was also conducted to deal with the research gap. The primary survey was conducted through a qualitative questionnaire. This questionnaire helped in getting responses from viewers and provided the latest data.

The survey was conducted amongst a sample ranging from 18 and above. The responses were collected in March and April 2021. A detailed analysis of the responses has provided concrete conclusions that answer the questions of this study. Thus, this study successfully provided firm responses to the research questions.

The study results showed that there is a certain lack of awareness amongst viewers on the topic of product placement. This indirectly could impact the image of advertisements in the viewer's mind. Lack of awareness could also lead to lower sales. If they increase awareness, then many more people might be attracted to the products that are being advertised, and this could lead to more significant publicity. The results also show that although people believe that they would not buy products that are placed in movies, viewers do end up buying these products regardless of their beliefs.

Furthermore, the "Make My Trip" placement did affect the viewers' preferences. This proved that product placement is more effective than it is considered. It is important to note that viewers were not as interested in buying imported products that they had seen in Hollywood movies. The possible reason for this could be that imported products generally cost more due to heavy taxes attached to them, and extra shipping costs are also required to ship items from one country to another. Imported goods also take much time ranging from many days to months, to be delivered. Thus, product placement of products that are not available in India in Hollywood movies is not an effective way of advertising products to Indians.

The Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in viewership. This is a particularly good time to increase movie product placement, but it must be done cautiously since obvious advertising may lead to negative results. People prefer watching movies on OTT streaming services. Hence, product placements play an important role in advertising since these services

do not play ads in intervals in-between the movies as it is done on traditional cinema or T.V. viewing experiences. As online shopping saw a rise during the pandemic, the accessibility of goods has also increased. Advertisers should benefit from this as well. An interesting result surfaced while going through the data collected that although the Covid-19 pandemic did not increase product placement related sales, it did impact the few products that were bought in the pandemic period after seeing their placements in movies.

Findings also showed that although product placement is not the most popular choice for different ways of advertising, it is in the top three preferences. Thus, it can be said that it can be very effective while marketing a brand or product. The respondents also provided detailed insight to make advertisements better. Their advice outlined the possibility that they have observed many advertisements lie about the product's features, and they believe that if the advertisements were more honest, they would appeal to many more people. Another popular piece of advice in the responses was that the products need to be placed subtly in the plot, but they should also be visible in the frame. However, it should not distract the viewer from the movie and should be well incorporated into the storyline. This advice has also come up in previous studies researching the topic under consideration.

Limitations

As with most studies, a few limitations surfaced during the analysis of data in this research. Since the Covid-19 pandemic is still very active in most parts of the world, all data must be collected remotely. This meant that there could not be any physical interaction with respondents. This restricted the research to a great extent. In the past, a lot of studies collected data by going up to respondents and asking them to fill out questionnaires or just by asking them the same questions verbally and filling it out for them. In such a situation, if any misunderstanding or miscommunication happened, it was possible for the respondents to clear out their doubts by asking questions to the researchers themselves. However, due to the lockdown, communication was restricted.

While going through the responses, it became apparent that a considerable number of respondents were not sure what the term product placement stands for, which may have led to confusion throughout the questionnaire. Some viewers may have considered product placement in shows or series while answering the questionnaire, although it was explicitly mentioned that the research is restricted to product placement in movies. In some instances, respondents indirectly contradicted themselves while answering two different questions. Another limitation

that arose was that respondents were not aware of the ethical implications of product placement and the subtle form of advertisements. Thus, a lack of awareness could have potentially hampered the conclusions.

Scope for Future Applications of Study

This research provides detailed insight into the effectiveness of marketing and advertising, especially the analysis of the primary survey conducted for this study provides the perspective of potential consumers. Marketeers can use this data to improve their advertisements. This could help them to make profits by an increase in engagement with content. If people engage with well-catered advertisements, they might buy more products that satisfy their needs. The results could also help put forth things that Advertisers must not do while promoting products or brands. If advertisers take the respondents' advice into consideration, they could avoid spending huge amounts of money on useless advertising. This study could be used as a foundation for further research into the ethics of advertisements as well.

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UNDERSTANDING CONSUMERS' TAKE ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹⁸ THROUGH A HEALTH INSURANCE PERSPECTIVE¹

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the middle-class consumer's demand for health insurance in India, bearing in mind the Covid-19 crisis. Much literature has indicated that the demand for health and life insurance had increased during the Covid-19 period substantially. But it is not necessarily consistent with the ability to purchase it or the ability on the part of insurance companies to supply it to everyone. Not only individuals, but businesses too, had shut down, leading to unemployment, leading to individuals losing their insurance coverage. The paper tries to understand how much people consume, save and spend on availing healthcare and medicines, what are reasons they invest in a given health insurance company, how aware consumers are of given insurance companies and government schemes, etc. The study will also be used to assess the level of knowledge individuals have about health insurance, and whether they believe one should invest in health insurance during a pandemic like Covid-19. It also tries to understand which insurance company has been the most popular, and whether Covid-19 has affected the demand for health insurance.

Keywords: Risk, Covid-19, health, Insurance premium, awareness, trust, family.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study: The Coronavirus pandemic has been causing a major global disaster since 2019. Owing to the crisis, Governments in almost all countries and other stakeholders in different societies have been adopting various measures including lockdowns and other means of restrictions in order to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on health as well as the economy. One of these major stakeholders in the insurance industry, specifically the health insurance industry, has risk and uncertainty at its core. Insurance plays a huge role in the national economy. However, many Indians, during Covid-19 did not have health insurance coverage and were faced with additional burdens when diagnosed with the Coronavirus. The IRDAI(Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India) tries to ensure that the interests of policyholders are protected, to ensure that insurers and other stakeholders fulfill

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their obligation towards policyholders, to ensure that there is an emphasis on grievance redressal, etc.

Currently, in the health insurance sector, customers are being treated poorly at times, given that there is a lack of tolerance towards consumers, and policyholders do not have enough information about this situation. Insurance is a basic requirement for people and the lack of insurance in the pandemic has compounded many problems.

Covid-19 has disproportionately affected the poor and vulnerable population, and there is limited migration capacity given the Covid-19 situation. Unemployment has increased, especially in the informal sector. According to CMIE(Center for Monitoring Indian Economy) data, unemployment rates were 34%, and 44% of households reported a loss in income during the Covid-19 period. In the United States, the Affordable Care act acts as a safety net for people that lose employer-based insurance. The Kaiser family foundation found that about 79% of the population could lose insurance because of unemployment. Garrett and Gangopadhyaya(2020) found that the number of people qualifying for Medicaid (insurance for the low income earners) and subsidized insurance coverage would increase during this time. Levitt(2020) asserts that it is important to let people know about the coverage options and the application process to seek insurance. While some states in the US suffer due to differences in unemployment, others do not. The Affordable care act, an act to extend health insurance to millions of uninsured Americans, was signed by Obama in 2010. The act expanded Medicaid eligibility, and also prohibited companies from denying insurance due to pre-existing health conditions and allowed children to be on their parent's insurance coverage plan until 26 years of age. Within the first 5 years of the act, more than 16 million Americans obtained health insurance coverage, out of which young adults are the largest share. Health insurance was more accessible and affordable to people. The Indian government, too, needs to prioritize the economic security of all and ensure the proper management of health systems in the nation.

Insurance companies have suffered during Covid-19. Many insurance companies have had to shift their operations online. A PriceWaterhouseCoopers report mentions that insurance companies have managed the crisis well due to the investments they had made in technology. However, they need to focus on customer needs and customer behavior. The report anticipates in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, that remote work would be the norm in the future. They predict that virtual interactions might open up opportunities for servicing, selling, and building customer relationships, leading to better outcomes for insurers and policyholders. The report finds potential in the insurance industry's ability to use technology to be ahead of its competitors in terms of emerging from the crisis.

IRDAI mandated that all insurance companies have to start offering Covid-19 specific policies such as the Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak policy. While it allowed insurers to offer standard group policies, it also allowed them to decide the premium rates. IRDAI had designed Covid-19 related basic health insurance plans for both individuals and families for a period of 3.5-9.5 months. These policies cover dependent children up to the age of 25 among other beneficiaries and also cover people with comorbidities.

The IRDAI seeks to protect policyholder's interests, implement insurance laws (in terms of settling claims, insurance products and defining fraud and misinterpretation among others), educating customers, cautioning the public against fraud offers, identifying unfair business practices, adopting districts for insurance literacy, addressing policyholder's grievances, etc.

Need for the study: the study is important because there is very limited literature on how policyholders view health insurance and their purchasing decisions. The literature is very limited, especially concerning India. The study is important, especially at the time of Covid-19 as it has had a significant impact on health conditions worldwide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Health Insurance in India was established in the late 1940s-1950s. The civil servants and formal sector employees were enrolled in health insurance programs. As part of liberalization, the government allowed private sector insurance companies to operate. Since then, a large number of insurance products have been introduced.

The foundation of any type of insurance is fear and the risk of uncertainty. The pandemic has created several problems and uncertainty for individuals, businesses, economies, and different sectors. Insurance companies have therefore come forward to cover the loss of lives as well as of businesses(Mathur&Anil, 2020) The impact created by health and life insurance industries in salvaging the damage created by the Coronavirus varies according to the country, mortality rate, whether the insurance has been provided by public or private insurers as well as the level of coverage of their insurance products. Sadly, universal healthcare does not exist in most Asian countries.

Healthcare has always been expensive throughout the world, and the increased spending on medication owing to the Coronavirus has pulled many families into financial hardships, given that they do not have the access to insurance products. The study by Suryavanshi(2021) finds that the overall performance of insurance companies(life insurance in particular) has seen a slowdown, a downfall in creating newer policies, collection of premiums, and the sum assured.

Online insurance, owing to the pandemic, had seen a 30-40% growth. There has been an increasing awareness about insurance post Covid-19. The paper by Mathur&Anil(2020) suggests basic fixed benefit plans that protect people from huge out-of-pocket costs as optimal for poor individuals who might contract the flu. In India, while many health insurance products are capable of covering Covid-19 costs, many private and public insurance companies as mandated by the IRDAI have issued long-term and short-term corona-specific insurance products such as the Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak policy. The paper however found that at this time, while the premium rates are high, the demand is high as well. Kumar&Duggirala(2021) observes that the increase in the premium rates were due to privatization of insurance business, entry of stand-alone insurance companies, increasing healthcare costs among other reasons. Kamat&Katke(2021) finds that health insurance was demanded the most after life insurance(29.7%) owing to high healthcare expenditures. The insurance sector is in a state of transition, and both government and private are launching initiatives. The paper by Mangla&Agarwal(2020) indicates that insurance penetration in India is low, about 3.6% as of 2020. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India(IRDAI)has provided guidelines to insurance companies on handling Covid-19 claims such as reimbursement, collection of claims, and providing the time allowance for doing so, KYC authentication using Aadhar, introducing special provisions for senior citizens, etc.

However, despite a huge number of insurance products being put forth by various insurance companies, there is a mismatch between insurance companies and the medical system. The medical system suffers from a lack of adequate infrastructure, the rural-urban disparity with respect to medical services available, innovation of insurance products, the access to other stakeholders such as pharmaceuticals and insurance services to everybody on an equal basis. The health sector has been majorly underfunded in India, whether it has been hospital beds, or PPE kits, ICUs, and diagnostic facilities. Low-cost medications are generally available while the expensive medications are not. However, the poor opt for expensive medication and this increases the out-of-pocket expenditure, as reimbursement mechanisms by many insurance companies are weak. Duggal&Hooda(2021)imply that many Covid-19 patients who had insurance had been denied a part of their claim, as insurers are trying to protect their profits by reducing claim payouts, claiming that certain treatments were not covered by their insurance plan or that they had hidden certain information about their health status from the insurance companies while there was none. The paper finds that existing insurance claims are not effective in securing claims.

Covid-19 poses a significant threat to setting priorities in public policy. India had recently set up the Health Technology Assessment Board (HTAB) which performs the role of providing supporting evidence in informed policymaking. The HTAB mainly focuses on health maximization, equity in healthcare utilization, and reduction of out-of-pocket expenditure.

India faces a double burden of diseases, both communicable and non-communicable, however, the private providers of healthcare are more focused on non-communicable diseases. The NSSO survey of 2017-18 found that only 56% of the inpatient medical expenses were reimbursed. The government health insurance which has the motive of providing cashless insurance coverage for people has been able to reach only 7.69% of patients.

While there are so many insurers, India is on the top with respect to out-of-pocket expenditure, which is higher than Bhutan, Maldives, China and Thailand(Dang et.al, 2021). Duggal&Hooda(2021) found that about 40% of health expenditure by patients is out-of-pocket. Dutta(2020) conducted a SWOT analysis and found the following about the insurance sector in India:

1. Strengths: Growth trends are most likely to be high due to an increase in the per-capita income of the middle class. Facilities like cashless insurance and the launch of new products are the health insurance sector's current strengths.
2. Weakness: The financial condition of the industry is weak due to low investment, and public sector insurance, though lagging in implementation, is covering most of the insured in the country.
3. Opportunities: There is a possibility of future growth being higher and the possibility of expanding into the rural area.
4. Threat: Government regulations, economic downs, and recessions.

In China, it was discovered that when there is a higher perception of risk, it can affect the demand for insurance. In places with better medical treatment, it was found that people view the risk of Covid-19 to be lower, and even if the Covid-19 cases increase, it cannot affect their insurance demand. However, in places with poor medical conditions, the demand for insurance increases due to the fear of illnesses.

In terms of awareness about health insurance in India, Indumathi et. al(2016) established that about 75% of the 399 respondents were aware of health insurance, 202 were health insurance policyholders, and 197 had taken health insurance to cover medical expenses, while some had to take it as they were compelled by their employers to. Those in the age group of 45-54 were most aware of health insurance.

Dror et. al(2007) discovered from their study of TN, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Bihar that the willingness to pay for health insurance was directly proportional to the household size. There was also a positive relationship between the education level of the head of the household and their willingness to pay. It found that men were more likely to pay than women. It was also found that the most affluent households were willing to pay more, however, as a percentage of income, the trend was reversed. In terms of employee knowledge and willingness to pay for health insurance, a study conducted by Kulkarni et.al(2021) at the time of Covid-19 pinpoints that as many lost their jobs at the time of the pandemic, many did not have health coverage. The knowledge of insurance, however, showed an association between age and income of the participants. 32% of the population found that said insurance policies would cover their Covid-19 treatment, while 26% said the opposite about their health insurance policies. Mathur&Tripathi(2014) studied factors influencing customer's choices for insurance companies in the city of Ajmer and found that most of the respondents physically approached the insurance company(54%) while only 6.7% did it through mobile banking. They found that computerization of transactions, connectivity with banks, speed and efficiency of transactions, clear communication, the reputation of the company, professionalism of the staff, ease of operations, faster counter services, and secured internet banking were the most preferred factors. People here also gave more importance to service delivery, infrastructure, ease of opening an account, company working hours as well.

Solutions: A paper by Gopichandran et. al(2020) that studied Tamil Nadu's strategies towards preventing Covid-19, deduced that trust, especially in times of vulnerability as a major factor to reach out to healthcare regulators. While Tamil Nadu conducted aggressive door-to-door testing, preparing hospital beds, conducting cluster containment which had led to success in terms of improved healthcare indicators, it had lost trust in terms of lack of transparency, being intrusive and restrictive, and the increase in the number of cases despite the testing. Transparent communication, therefore, is yet another factor that builds the trust of people with their healthcare providers, not just governments, but the insurance industry as well. Kumar&Duggarila(2021) suggests that there is a trust deficit between hospitals and insurance companies as well. Dang et. al(2021) also argues that improving reimbursement mechanisms can improve insurance purchasing. Duggal&Hooda(2021) points out that given the poor healthcare system, the government is wrong in trying to privatize it. It pushes for the government to adopt structural reforms and build a stronger healthcare system. The health status of the country is also linked to having good relationships with the sources of healthcare

financing. Kumar&Duggarila(2021) contend that insurance companies should have a competitive advantage, and should have skills in coordinating resources, should try building better relationships with other healthcare providers, form alliances with pharmaceutical companies, and win the trust of consumers. To prevent unfair practices on the part of the insurers and the insured, Dutta(2020) recommends an upward revision of premium (the high premium deters people from buying health insurance), investigate immediately into unfair practices on the part of the policyholder, and health insurance pricing being made attractive to the younger generation. There is also a need for insurance companies to play a major role in reducing inequality. There needs to be an awareness that insurance companies have customers on both sides of the economic spectrum. While a certain section can afford to buy insurance, some cannot. The Covid-19 crisis has revived the conversations between organizations and society, where socially conscious firms are trying to create value for the shareholder and society. Such consciousness would also give the insurance company a competitive advantage.

1. **Risk:** refers to a situation of making decisions/choices with incomplete information. It involves having more than one course of action, the adoption of which leads to certain outcomes, each of which has a probability. Risk refers to incomplete information with respect to these probabilities. By signing an insurance contract, the insurer reduces the risk to some extent, by trying to foresee a possible outcome; through insurance, the decision-maker reaches an improved state of information(Muller,1981).
2. **Insurance pricing:** David(2015), from the reading of Denuit(2003), considers the insurance pricing process as a means of determining a fair premium that is related to the insured's individual risk profile. It is a combination of methods that fixes the price paid by insurers to the insured in exchange for risk transfer.
3. **Probability of Ruin:** the probability that the company will suffer a loss if an insurance contract is offered at a certain premium, it is often referred to as the theory of risk(Borch,1964).

Research gap: There is a lack of research on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health insurance demand in India as well as studies that understand what criteria customers prioritize while choosing a health insurance product or company. The literature available on health insurance purchases by middle income households is also largely limited.

Rationale: The rationale for the study is to understand the health insurance buying patterns in the light of Covid-19. The rationale is to fill the research gap of the limited literature on the

insurance purchasing patterns of the middle and upper-middle classes in India. There is a need to understand how the middle class has benefited from the use of their health insurance policies.

METHODOLOGY

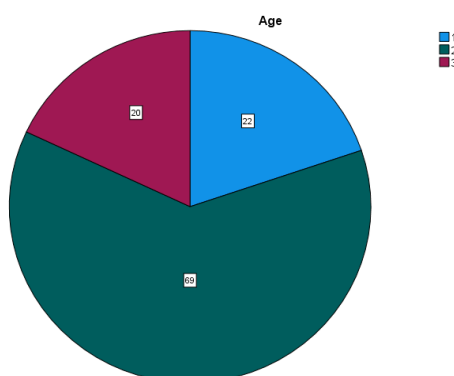
The aim of this paper was to understand the consumer's take on health insurance purchasing decisions in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The objective of this study was to 1. Understand how Covid-19 has impacted consumption of health insurance, 2. To understand people's motivations to buy health insurance and, 3. To understand which insurance company was the most popular during Covid-19. My research questions were: 1. How has the Coronavirus pandemic affected demand for health insurance products in India and 2. How do consumers in India choose to invest in health insurance?

The sample size of this study was 111 participants. Google forms were used for data collection and SPSS was used for data analysis. Apart from research papers, IRDAI and PricewaterhouseCoopers website was used for secondary data.

Results and discussion

The objective of this study was to understand how Covid-19 has impacted the consumption of health insurance, people's motivation to buy health insurance and the most popular insurance company. In terms of the demographics, the size of the sample was 111 participants, 59 of those who were covered by the health insurance plan and 52 of those who weren't. 22 people between the ages of 25-44, 69 people from 44-60 and 20 people who were above 60 participated in the study(see fig. 1).

Figure 1: age of participants

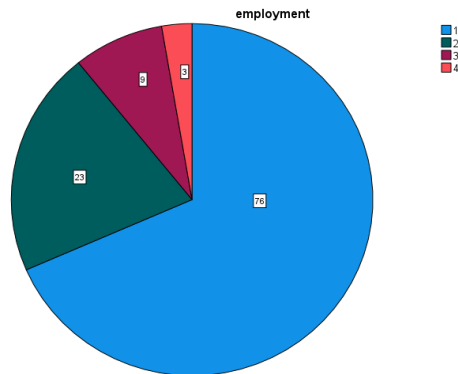


1= 25-44 | 2=45-60 | 3=60 and above

1= male |2= female

There were 97 males and 14 female participants. Most of the families were 3-member households(60). In terms of employment, the highest number(76) were working in an organization.(see fig.2)

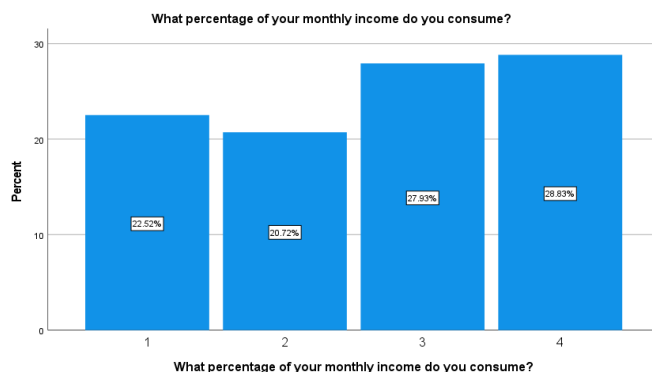
Figure 2: Employment details of the respondent



1= working in an organization | 2= retired from service | 3= self employed | 4= unemployed

With regards to gender wise educational qualification, most males(45) were professional degree holders, followed by postgraduates(26), followed by graduates(19). There were more males than females in the study. Most females were either professionals(5) or graduates(5). Totally, 50 professional degree holders were the highest number of participants in the study. In terms of age wise educational qualification, those between 44-60 were the most educated, most of them being professional degree holders(29), followed by postgraduates(20) followed by graduates(19). 97 males and 14 females participated. The highest number of participants(76) were working in an organization, 23 had retired from service, and 9 were self employed. The family size of the highest number of respondents(60) were 3. In terms of consumption, the highest (32) consumed about 60% of their income.(fig.3)

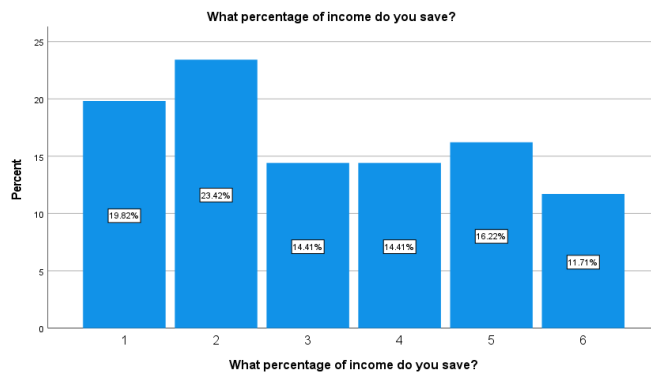
Figure 3: Consumption level as a percentage of the income



1= less than 15%- 35% | 2= 35-45% | 3=45-60% | 4=more than 60%

In terms of saving, the highest (26) saved about 15-25% of their income.(fig.4)

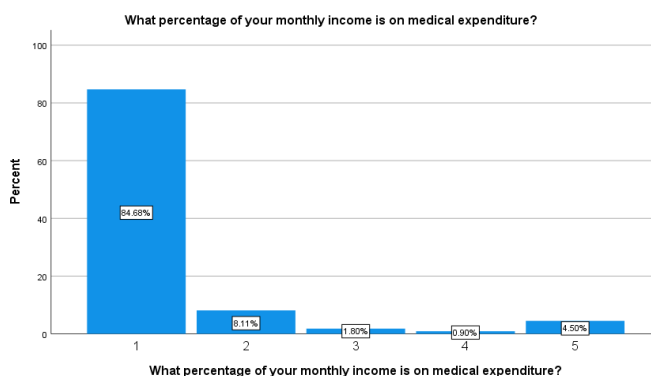
Figure 4: Savings level as a percentage of the income



1= less than 15% | 2= 15-25% | 3=25-35% | 4=35-45% | 5=45-60% | 6= more than 60%

With respect to medical expenditure as a percentage of their income, 94 people spent 0-20% of their income on medical expenses. Only 5 people were in the extreme range of spending 75% and above of their income on medical expenses.(fig.5).

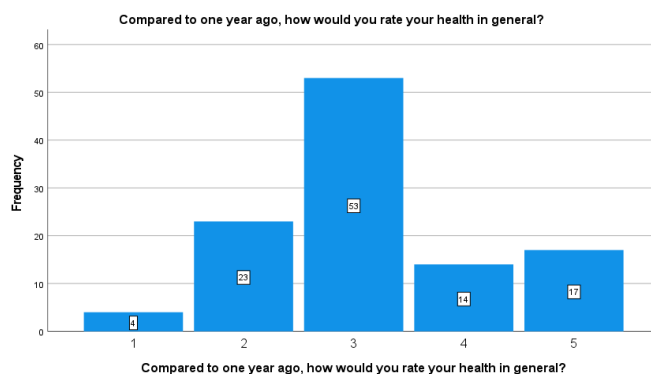
Figure 5: Expenditure on medical as a percentage of the income



1= 0-20% | 2= 20-40% | 3=40-60% | 4= 60-75% | 5=75% and above

When asked “compared to one year ago, how would you rate your health in general”, most(53) rated it as neutral.(ref. Fig 6).

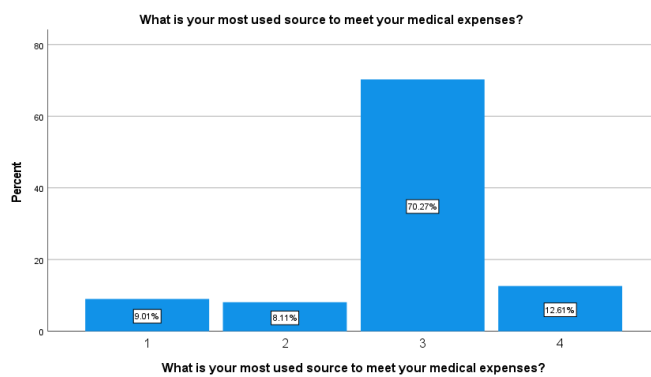
Figure 6: Health status as compared to one year ago



1= much better than 1 year ago | 2= somewhat better than 1 year ago | 3= about the same | 4= somewhat worse than one year ago | 5= much worse than one year ago

The most used sources to meet medical expenditure was studied, most participants(78) were paid by their employer(s), followed by health insurance (14), followed by government medical service(10) followed by their own savings (9). (fig.7)

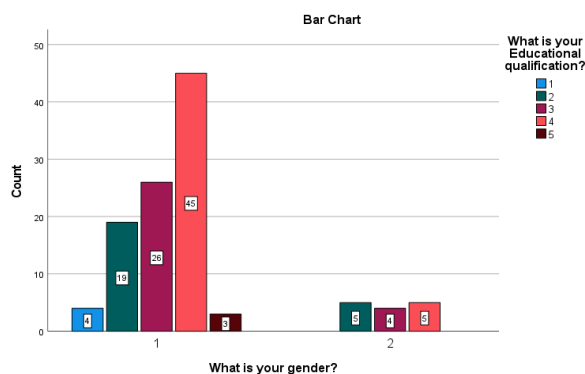
Figure 7: Most used source to meet medical expenses



1= government medical service | 2= own savings | 3= paid by employer | 4=health insurance

In terms of gender wise educational qualification, the results were disproportionate as there were not equal numbers of males as compared to females. Most of the participants were professional degree holders(fig 8).

Figure 8: Gender-wise educational qualification



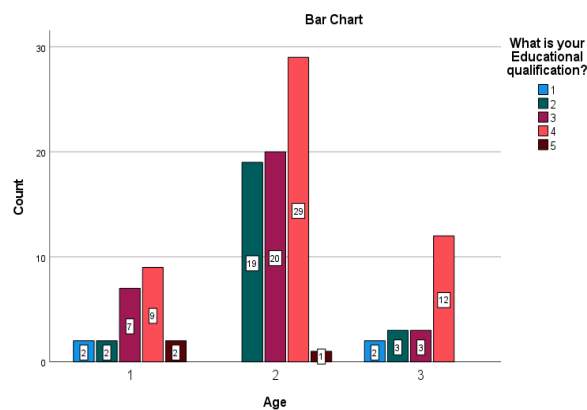
Educational qualification

1= below graduation | 2= graduation | 3=post graduation | 4= professional degree holder | 5= diploma

Gender

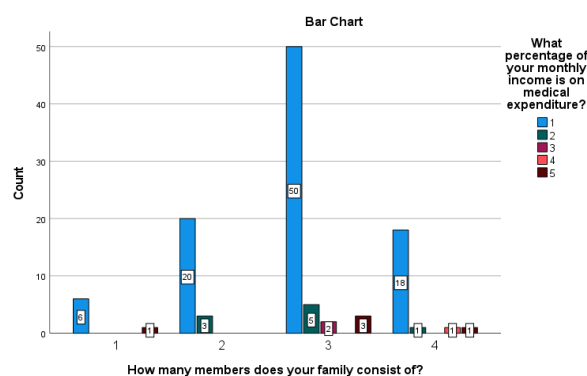
1= male | 2=female

Agewise education qualification showed the same results.(fig.9).

Figure 9: Age-wise educational qualification

Age: 1= 18-44 | 2=45-60 | 3= 60 and above

While analyzing the percentage of income spent on medical care based on the number of family members, it was surprisingly found that most people, in spite of having 4 family members(18), did not spend beyond 20% on medical care out of pocket. However, 3 families with 3 family members spent above 75% on medical expenses. (fig.10)

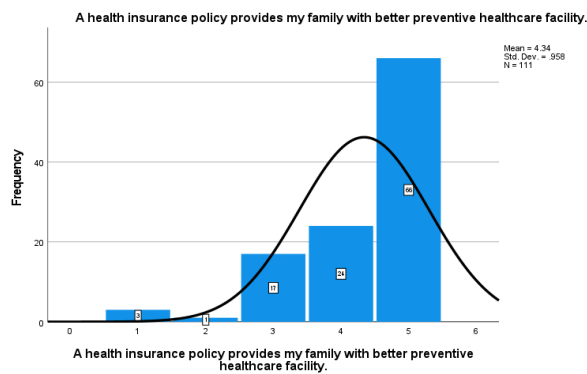
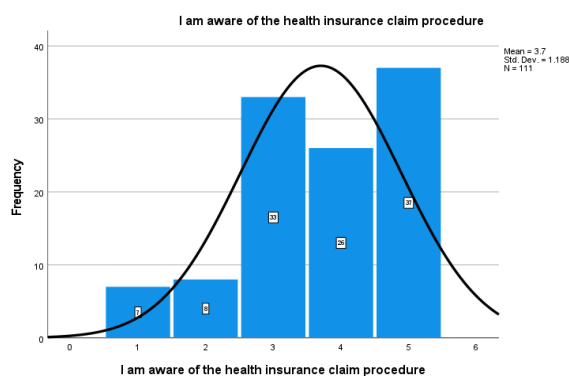
Figure 10: Percentage of income on medical expenditure(based on family size)

What percentage of income is on medical expenditure:

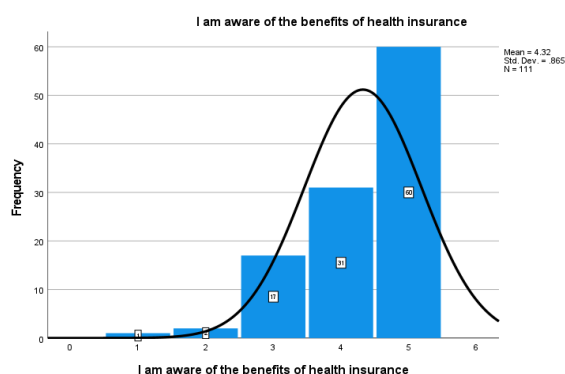
1= 0-20% | 2=20-40% | 3=40-60% | 4=60-75% | 5=75% and above

Literature mentions spending on health insurance was proportional to family size. An analysis conducted on reasons not to buy health insurance revealed that most people were already covered by health insurance (39) or used other sources (42). However, 10 did not feel the need to invest, 4 felt that there was no return on investment and 3 found it too costly.

However, 63 people strongly agreed that people should invest in health insurance during epidemics like Covid-19, while only 7 people strongly disagreed. 66 people (59.5%) strongly agreed that a health insurance policy would provide their family with a better preventive healthcare facility(fig.11), and 75 (67.6%) people believed that it is better to take health insurance at a young age. 63 were well aware of the health insurance claim procedure. (fig.12).

Figure 11: A health insurance policy provides my family with better preventive care**Figure 12: I am aware of the health insurance claim procedure**

With regards to awareness, 60 were very well aware of the benefits of health insurance, while 31 were moderately well aware (fig 13).

Figure 13: I am aware of the benefits of health insurance

54 were very well aware of the companies in the market offering health insurance, while 30 were moderately aware. In terms of reasons to buy health insurance, only 74 participants responded to the question, out of which 26(35.1%) cited protection from rising health insurance costs as a reason. The next most cited reason was better healthcare for families (31.1% or 23 people).

It was followed by tax benefits (16.2%), expecting health problems (5.4%) and others (10.8%). In general, when asked for reasons to buy health insurance, 26(23.4%) cited protection from

rising healthcare costs, 12(10.8%) cited tax benefits, 1 cited attractive schemes, 4(3.6%) cited expected health problems, 23(20.7%) cited better healthcare for families. A cross-tabulation between people's rating of their health from 1-5 with 1 being much better than 1 year ago, and 5 being much worse than 1 year ago, versus reason to buy health insurance, protection from rising healthcare costs was the highest cited reason (26), and people who rated their health status change as neutral were the highest (28). They mostly specified the reason to buy health insurance as better healthcare for their families (13), followed by protection from rising healthcare costs (8) and tax benefits (7). Following rising healthcare costs, better healthcare for families (23) and tax benefits (12) were the most cited reasons.

When asked if people had been reimbursed the whole amount they had spent on medication and availing healthcare, 65 found the question not applicable to them, 28 were reimbursed and 18 were not reimbursed. When asked what are the most important reason to select an insurance company, people cited trustworthiness (39.6%), low premiums (10.8%), early claim settlement (19.8%), tax savings(13.5%), how good the insurance scheme is (9.9%), how many illnesses are covered(12.6%), trust in the insurance provider(21.6%), and brand name(1.8%). An analysis that identified reasons not to buy health insurance based on whether people have been covered by health insurance revealed that most people that were not covered by health insurance, the only reason was that they used other sources (36), and 10 did not feel the need to invest in health insurance.

A cross-tabulation between the participants already being covered by a specific health insurance plan and reason not to buy health insurance revealed that most were already covered by health insurance (28) or were using other sources (16). A cross-tabulation between age and reason to buy health insurance revealed that mostly, people from all age groups cited protection from rising healthcare costs (26) and better healthcare for families (23). More people between the age of 45-60 also cited tax benefits as a reason. Senior citizens invested the least. A cross-tabulation between no. of family members and those who cited the reason to buy health insurance as better healthcare for family, only 23 totally had even voted for that option. Out of this, 4 had 2 family members, 12 had 3 family members and 7 had 4 family members.

In terms of awareness of private health insurance, ICICI was the most popular (90), followed by Bajaj (80), Reliance and national insurance(73). The least popular was Magma (18) and Digit Health (11). In terms of awareness of government health insurance schemes, Ayushman Bharat (75) was the most prominent, followed by PM Suraksha Bima(73), employment state insurance(51) and Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana(29).

A cross-tabulation was created using educational qualification and awareness about private health insurance. Professional degree holders were most aware of the scheme (47) as compared to postgraduates(30) followed by graduates(21) and below graduates(3). Among the professional degree holders, ICICI Lombard (42) and Bajaj health insurance (39) were the most popular, followed by Reliance (37). In terms of postgraduates, the awareness levels of various health insurance companies were very similar- star health (20), reliance (20), ICICI (28), Max Bupa (19), National insurance (20) and Bharti AXA (20).

A cross-tabulation between educational qualification and reason to select a company revealed that the highest number of people who believed that trustworthiness is one of the most important characteristics for an insurance company were professional degree holders, followed by postgraduates. Graduates mostly believed that trustworthiness and trust in the insurance provider (7) were important characteristics. Following this, early claim settlement tax-saving and low premium were regarded as important. Low premium was voted for the most by professional degree holders. Brand name was considered only by professional degree holders. In terms of educational qualification versus knowledge of government health insurance plans, as mentioned before, Ayushman Bharat was the most popular, especially among professional degree holders followed by postgraduates.

As many professional degree holders and postgraduates knew about Ayushman Bharat as they knew about the PM Suraksha Bima Yojana. Among graduates, PM Suraksha Bima was the most popular followed by Ayushman Bharat, employee state insurance scheme and Aam Admi Bima Yojana.

Gender wise reasons to select an insurance company revealed that men and women both mostly considered trustworthiness of the company followed by trust in the insurance provider and then early claim settlement. Age wise reasons to select a company revealed the same results as above. In terms of popularity of a health insurance company age wise, ICICI was most popular among 45–60-year-olds, as was Bajaj (52).

5. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD:

There are no age and gender differences in choosing a particular health insurance or the reasons to buy health insurance. In terms of awareness, professional degree holders are most aware of both private and public health insurance schemes, followed by postgraduates as opposed to graduates. In terms of popularity, ICICI Lombard was the most popular, followed by Bajaj and Reliance. Most people are covered by their employers, and do not see the need to invest in health insurance outside what is being provided. However their reason to invest mostly is

protection from rising healthcare costs and better healthcare for their family. People have very little reason not to invest in health insurance, which shows that existing schemes are good. As opposed to the available literature, which shows an increase in demand for health insurance, the demand for health insurance does not seem to have increased. Most of the respondents are aware of the benefits of health insurance and also believe that it is a good idea to invest in health insurance at a young age. Trustworthiness and trust in the insurance provider have shown to be important determinants of choosing a health insurance company.

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**ESCAPING THE “OTHER”:
GENDER, POWER AND MYTH IN MADELINE MILLER’S *CIRCE*¹**

Asmita Kumbhar

Abstract

This paper will examine the interplay of the themes of gender and power in Miller’s novel *Circe*, focusing primarily on the titular character, along with other aspects such as mortality and fear, to demonstrate how patriarchal norms seek to subvert women of power even today. It will be preceded by a brief exploration of the retelling of mythology as a gendered space. This will be done using Harold Bloom’s concept of *tessera* in *The Anxiety of Influence*, Georg Lukacs’ discourse surrounding the epic and the novel from *The Theory of the Novel* and Alicia Ostriker’s theory of feminist revisionist mythmaking. The central objective will be to challenge the idea of the “eternal feminine” and the casting of powerful women as the “Other” in mythology, using Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal treatise, *The Second Sex*, with respect to the character of Circe.

Keywords: *Greek mythology, feminism, retelling, Other, eternal feminine*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Myths have the power to shape cultures. The mythologies of different cultures and the characters they feature often become intertwined with the people and are told and retold for generations. Myths are inextricable from the fabric of their cultures and can dictate the ways of life and societal roles of that culture. Perhaps the most widely known mythology is that of Ancient Greece. The tales of Greek heroes like Achilles, Theseus, and Odysseus have been immortalized in the epic poems of Homer, Ovid, and Apollonius of Rhodes, as have the gods and monsters who play crucial roles in their adventures. However, the female characters in these myths have often been treated as supporting cast, even mere literary devices used to further the male hero's tale. One such character who offers a striking example of this phenomenon is Circe.

The goddess Circe is most known in Greek mythology for her encounter with Odysseus in Homer's epic, the *Odyssey*. Critics and scholars have noted that Homer's Circe is one dimensional, a mere literary device used to further Odysseus' narrative. Circe shares this characteristic with many other female characters, including her fellow sorceress Calypso and her niece, Medea. The figure of Circe has been adapted by poets, painters, and writers for centuries, drawing upon Homer as well as Ovid and Apollonius as sources. However, most of these portray Circe as the stereotypical "wicked witch".

Madeline Miller's novel, *Circe* (2018), is a feminist adaptation of the myth of Circe. Miller's Circe narrates her own story, from the teeming halls of her father's palace to the solitary shores of her exile to an island. While Miller stays, for the most part, true to the character as established by her predecessors, she offers explanations and alternative reasoning for Circe's actions, giving her a depth that is absent in the *Odyssey*. She is no longer the "Other" but is the eponymous heroine. In the novel, Circe represents the powerful women who are categorized as overly promiscuous, quick to temper, irrationally evil for not conforming to the traditionally accepted ideals of femininity. Miller, thus, is reclaiming the character of Circe and is simultaneously claiming a space for herself in a long line of 'feminist revisionist mythmakers' (Ostriker, 1982). Miller herself being a woman in the field of rewriting classics, can be said to be reclaiming her narrative, as was rightly pointed out by Alicia Ostriker in her essay "Thieves of Language"; "Women writers have always tried to steal the language." (Ostriker, 1982. p. 69). Mythology, in particular, has been seen as inhospitable terrain for

women, as this is where the heroes thrive. Therefore, it is significant for Miller, as a woman and a writer, to be retelling the story of Circe.

This research project shall, therefore, explore the gendered nature of writing, along with a brief inquiry into the genre of retelling and how the forms of the epic and the novel play into it. Further, the themes of gender and power will be explored as two ideas inextricably intertwined in Miller's *Circe* and the themes of fear, love, and motherhood, among others. The central part of this paper will be the challenge to the myth of the "eternal feminine" and to separate the essence of womanhood from the womb, as Simone de Beauvoir has argued. This paper, therefore, will aim to escape the casting of women as the "Other", both in the writing of literature itself as well as the literature written.

1.2 Literature Review

The primary source for this study will be Madeline Miller's novel, *Circe*. In an interview with PBS, Miller has acknowledged that "what we see is that Circe, in *The Odyssey*, she's just a cameo in Odysseus' life." (Miller, 2019). This motivated her to write *Circe* as the main character: the question of who she was before appearing and after disappearing from Odysseus' story. Drawing from various sources, Miller offers a feminist retelling of both the infamous and lesser-known elements of the story of Circe and diverging from the past characterizations of the character. Homer's *Odyssey*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodes will be referred to in this study as well to make an effective comparison.

To take on the task of adapting works such as the *Odyssey*, which dictated much of today's knowledge of Greek mythology, comes with its own share of anxiety. This anxiety of influence is what critic Harold Bloom wrote extensively about in his theory, *The Anxiety of Influence*. Bloom develops his theory of how poetry is, for the most part, a response of the later poets to their predecessors. He sets down six 'revisionary ratios' that talk about the relationship between the influencer and the influenced, one of which deals with the instances of when an author does not reject the work of those that preceded them, but instead provides alternative paths and elaborations, essentially taking forward what is already established. This is precisely what Miller's novel does, making Bloom's concept an interesting perspective from which to study it.

Another influential literary theory is the one put forth by Georg Lukacs in his historico-philosophical book, *The Theory of the Novel*. Lukacs states that the Greek epics, such as those written by Homer, are authentic totalities, complete in themselves, while novels are not.

According to Lukacs, the novel form is the representative art form of the modern world. His theory, therefore, provides a perspective from which to look at whether the novel form of *Circe* is a successor of the epic poems of Homer and his contemporaries.

In addition to the influencing work of predecessors and the form of the retelling, the nature of the space informs the writing of an author. American poet Alicia Ostriker, in her essay titled “The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking.”, states how women writers have always had to ‘steal the language’ from the dominant male narratives. She observes that mythology has been inhospitable for women writers previously, noting that thanks to myth, women are either defined as innocent, virtuous, and good or promiscuous and evil with no in-betweens. However, she says that myths cannot be separated from culture and society, a sentiment echoed by Miller, and it is for this reason, according to Ostriker, that women must revise these myths, putting forth her theory of feminist revisionist mythmaking.

In revising the myth of Circe, Miller has ensured that she is now the protagonist and no longer the “Other”. This othering of women by the patriarchal society is a central theme in Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal treatise, *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir states that being male has been considered the default of humanity, and women have been sidelined as the “Other” throughout history. She writes of the myth of the “eternal feminine” being a tool used to strip women of their individuality and agency, forcing them to subscribe to one particular way of being. She argues that mythologies have been used to imprison women and that the way to change this is for women to reclaim those very mythologies.

This othering of women has also led to them being stereotyped, silenced, and put into a box. Circe has been seen as a wicked witch, an immortal sorceress who turns the men who chance upon her island to pigs until defeated by Odysseus, after which she becomes a timid companion to him. In the paper “Circean Temptations”, Charles Segal outlines the double construction of Circe as a character who is simultaneously a wild, dangerous enemy and a tame, generous hostess. Yvonne Rodax as well, in the paper “In Defence of Circe”, comments on the characterization of the goddess as a sexually wicked villain, a mother, a neutral enchantress. Rodax concludes with speculation of what the next version of Circe will look like, thus lending her flexibility and complexity of character absent in most of the sources featuring her, establishing Circe as an idea more than a person.

There has been a considerable amount of scholarship on the Ancient Greek epics and the modern retellings of the same. However, these have more often than not been separate studies, or have not incorporated certain aspects of the relationship between gender, the characters and the author, and how this ties in to female agency and the feminist voice. This

research project shall therefore refer to as much of the existing literature as possible while attempting to fill in the gaps that are present in it.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main aim of this research project is to explore how the roles and functions of female characters in myths and folklore, in this case, Greek mythology, impact the perceptions of the female gender as a whole, as well as how the emerging phenomenon of feminist retellings of these myths is working to change these perceptions. This project will look at Madeline Miller's novel as the primary text while referencing other Ancient Greek texts that created the myths eons ago. It will also explore how the creation of these myths, and the writing of literature as a whole, has been a gendered space. The central objective of this paper, therefore, will be to challenge the portrayal of women as the "Other" in myths and showcase how female writers and female characters are reclaiming their narratives in the 21st century as part of the long history of feminist writings.

1.4 Research Question

An exploration of the themes of gender, power and myth in Madeline Miller's *Circe* in an attempt to establish Miller as a feminist revisionist mythmaker, use the novel to illustrate Beauvoir's rejection of the myth of the 'eternal feminine' and explore how 21st century retellings of ancient myths contribute to feminist literature.

1.5 Methodology/Approach

This research study will employ a qualitative methodology, using textual criticism of Madeline Miller's *Circe*, the novel chosen, as the primary mode of study. It will adopt a hermeneutical approach, as it will involve interpreting and re-interpreting the selected text through the lens of various literary theories. A close, symptomatic reading of *Circe* will also be employed to identify the relevant underlying themes and concepts present. This will be a narrative and descriptive study and will not follow a structured outline of enquiry in anticipation of the emergence of different ideas during the process and to not limit the exploration of the same.

1.6 Limitations

No research is without its limitations. Despite efforts to keep this project free of any personal biases, the views and opinions of the researcher may have influenced the project.

Another potential limitation is the omission of other sources featuring the character of Circe, which could not be included in the current study due to lack of resources and time, along with the limited scope of an independent undergraduate research project.

2. ‘We Breathed into the Empty Space He Left Behind’²¹: Epic, Novel and Feminist Writing

Lukacs, in his *Theory of the Novel*, states that the Greek epic is an authentic ‘totality’, complete and whole in itself. This is to say that the epic successfully encompasses every aspect of life as ‘The Greek knew only answers but no questions, only solutions (even if enigmatic ones) but no riddles, only forms but no chaos.’ (Lukacs, 1974). He further states:

For the epic, the world at any given moment is an ultimate principle; it is empirical at its deepest, most decisive, all-determining transcendental base; it can sometimes accelerate the rhythm of life, can carry something that was hidden or neglected to a Utopian end which was always immanent within it, but it can never, while remaining epic, transcend the breadth and depth, the rounded, sensual, richly ordered nature of life as historically given (Lukacs, 1974. p. 46).

Therefore, epics such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* can be considered to be representative of a whole, united community. Lukacs in fact, praises Homer, stating that ‘And if no one has ever equalled Homer, nor even approached him -- for, strictly speaking, his works alone are epics - - it is because he found the answer before the progress of the human mind through history had allowed the question to be asked.’ (Lukacs, 1974).

Society, however, has changed drastically from what it was during the Ancient Greek times, and we now have more questions about the human condition than answers. The epic, therefore, can no longer be a form that functions successfully in the 21st century, thus transitioning into the novel. Writes Lukacs:

The epic and the novel, these two major forms of great epic literature, differ from one another not by their authors’ fundamental intentions but by the given historico-philosophical realities with which the authors were confronted. The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality (Lukacs, 1974. p. 56).

²¹ All chapter titles are quotes from the primary text

According to him, the epic had already become, while the novel is in the ‘process of becoming’, and this fits better with the evolving nature of the world, which is itself in the process of becoming. The novel, therefore, does not tell the complete story but instead ‘seeks, by giving form, to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life.’ (Lukacs, 1974). However, this works well because in the 21st century there may not be, and perhaps shouldn’t be, any one single whole or complete myth. As society and the rules along which it operates keep being written and rewritten, so the narratives which play a role in shaping this society are being told and retold.

This is where we factor in Harold Bloom’s *Anxiety of Influence*. While primarily a theory of poetry, the second of his six ‘revisionary ratios’ can also be applied to Miller’s *Circe*. In this, the *tessera*, Bloom states that the revised or retold work seeks to provide an alternate narrative to the original or take it further, thereby offering ‘completion’. He writes, ‘In the *tessera*, the later poet provides what his imagination tells him would complete the otherwise “truncated” precursor poem and poet, a “completion” that is as much misprision as a revisionary swerve is.’ (Bloom, 1997. p. 66). His use of the term ‘misprision’ is interesting as it claims that authors misinterpret the works they revise, perhaps deliberately so as to distinguish themselves from the predecessor. Miller believes that this in fact, aids the myths to keep on living, saying in an interview with One Read:

The Greek myths have been rewritten and retold in nearly every generation since they were created. Homer is the oldest version of these stories that we have, but Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides revisited them, as did Plato, Vergil, Ovid, Dante, Shakespeare, James Joyce, Margaret Atwood, Derek Walcott, and thousands upon thousands more. Myths live because they are told and retold - there is no such thing as a definitive myth, and that's a good thing! (One Read, 2019).

In another interview, she says: ‘The profundity of myths comes from the multiplicity of possible interpretations.’ (Juin, 2021). Thus, the relevance of Bloom’s concept of *tessera* lies not in the act of completion but in the addition of parts and perspectives to the established narratives. “‘Be me but not me” is the paradox of the precursor’s implicit charge to the ephebe. Less intensely, his poem says to its descendant poem: “Be like me but unlike me.” (Bloom, 1997), he writes, urging the descendant writer not to reject the precursors, but to expand and discover newer facets, an important one of which is the feminist.

A vast majority of critics and scholars have identified *Circe* as a feminist retelling of the original myth, counting it among the likes of *The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood and *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker. This, the retelling of myths from the perspectives of the

women characters who were sidelined in the original narratives, becomes more significant when one considers that women have been sidelined in the writing of literature. Alicia Ostriker, in her essay “The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking”, says that ‘Women writers have always tried to steal the language.’ (Ostriker, 1982). A major theme in feminist literature, she says, has been the demand that female writers be ‘voleuses de langue’, or ‘female Prometheuses’ (Ostriker, 1982). The reference to Greek myth aside, Ostriker is saying what has been evident in the writing of literature for a long time: women aren’t welcome. Ostriker, therefore, proposes ‘revisionist mythmaking’, stating that:

Whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible (Ostriker, 1982. p. 72).

Consider Circe herself, who featured briefly as a side character in the *Odyssey*. She first appears as a wicked witch, a hindrance to Odysseus, who turns his men into pigs. She then turns into a submissive and eager to please host, even inviting Odysseus into her bed, following which she becomes the helping hand without whose advice Odysseus may never have made it back to Ithaca. The reader is never allowed a single glimpse into the rationale behind these decisions, not even as conjecture, instead simply expected to accept Odysseus’ account of the encounter. In a male-centric narrative written by a male poet, Circe is no more than a one-dimensional plot point, a mere literary device used to further Odysseus’ journey. Not only are women’s voices absent in the myths, but also in the writing of these myths. Says Ostriker,

At first thought, mythology seems an inhospitable terrain for a woman writer. There we find the conquering gods and heroes, the deities of pure thought and spirituality so superior to Mother Nature; there we find the sexually wicked Venus, Circe, Pandora, Helen, Medea, Eve, and the virtuously passive Iphigenia, Alcestis, Mary, Cinderella. It is thanks to myth we believe that woman must be either “angel” or “monster.” (Ostriker, 1982. p. 72).

Here, she mentions the stereotypical construction of women characters as either good or evil, never possessing more depth. Miller seeks to question such a stereotype in her novel, wherein the reader sees Circe not only as a sorceress, which she still is, but also as a daughter, sister, lover, and mother. Miller demonstrates that even a woman like Circe, who has always been portrayed as sexually wicked, can be more. Ostriker has also stated that ‘the core of revisionist mythmaking for women poets lies in the challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes

embodied in myth' (Ostriker, 1982. p. 73). Miller's *Circe*, therefore, should be considered a valuable addition to the tradition of revisionist mythmaking and feminist literature as a whole.

3. 'Witches are not so Delicate': The Female Voice

The eponymous heroine of Miller's novel has been woven into stories throughout Greek mythology, and this interconnectedness is part of what ensures the survival of most of these narratives. Without knowing how one is related to another, the entire picture will remain a blur. These links between myths also provide readers with more than one perspective through which to consider them. However, the character of Circe has been portrayed in much the same light in every major source. That is, until Miller's *Circe*.

3.1 The Witch

The most widely referenced source for the myth of Circe is Homer's *Odyssey*, book 10 and 11. Odysseus narrates his encounter with the goddess at the court of Phaacia, recounting how his crew land on the shores of Circe's island, Aiaia²² and half of them are sent ahead to scout the island. When they happen upon Circe's home, she invites them in, supplies them with food and drink, and then promptly uses her magic to turn them into swine. The reader is forced to assume that she has no rationale guiding her actions, resulting from her inherent wickedness. Indeed, terms such as 'Circe's wicked potions', 'Circe's fatal ploys' are used to portray her as irrational and dangerous (Homer & Johnston, 2006). However, she changes to 'the lovely goddess Circe' (Homer & Johnston, 2006) after Odysseus defeats her, becoming a submissive host and lover to Odysseus and his crew after losing to him. Odysseus narrates:

'But I pulled out the sharp sword on my thigh and charged at Circe, as if I meant to kill her. She gave a piercing scream, ducked, ran up, and clasped my knees. Through her tears she spoke - her words had wings:

'What sort of man are you?

Where are you from? Where is your city?

Your parents? I'm amazed you drank this drug

And were not bewitched. No other man

who's swallowed it has been able to resist,

once it's passed the barrier of his teeth.

²² Alternatively spelled "Aeaea". While this is the dominant form of the word, this paper will use "Aiaia" as it is the form used in Miller's novel.

In that chest of yours your mind holds out
 against my spell. You must be Odysseus,
 that resourceful man. The Killer of Argus,
 Hermes of the Golden Wand, always told me
 Odysseus in his swift black ship would come
 on his way back from Troy. Come, put that sword
 back in its sheath, and let the two of us
 go up into my bed. When we've made love,
 then we can trust each other.' (Homer & Johnston, 2006. p. 198,199).

Despite being a goddess skilled at sorcery, Circe is shown to immediately surrender to Odysseus, praising him and inviting him into her bed. Odysseus makes her swear an oath on the River Styx - the most binding oath possible - that she will not harm his men before agreeing to her proposition. In this situation, Odysseus seems to have the upper hand, despite his lack of divinity and power. J.D. McClymont, in "The Character of Circe in the *Odyssey*", writes: 'Given that there is a level where Circe appears to be beaten and another level where, via the oath, she seems to be Odysseus' social partner, can we say that Odysseus has won an unambiguous victory? Is Circe subjugated or is she Odysseus' equal?' (McClymont, 2012). For a male narrator, having a goddess willingly and instantaneously surrender is the more attractive story to tell. Miller provides an alternative sequence of events in her revision, where Circe and Odysseus meet on an equal footing and come to an agreement. Circe narrates:

Later, years later, I would hear a song made of our meeting. The boy who sang it was unskilled, missing notes more often than he hit, yet the sweet music of the verses shone through his mangling. I was not surprised by the portrait of myself: the proud witch undone before the hero's sword, kneeling and begging for mercy. Humbling women seems to me a chief pastime of poets. As if there can be no story unless we crawl and weep (Miller, 2018. p. 181).

In what is a clear allusion to Homer's *Odyssey*, Miller acknowledges her predecessor but proposes an alternate version of events in what is a notable practice of feminist revisionism.

3.2 The Victim

In Miller's novel, the reader is also given insight into Circe's life beyond just her encounter with Odysseus. This version of Circe is trying to build a life worth living in her island exile and is kind and welcoming. This kindness, however, is repaid in crime. Before Odysseus and his men, a crew of sailors happens upon Aiaia and Circe invites them in,

providing food and drink. Being proponents of the patriarchal times, they ask to thank the man of the house and, upon learning there is only Circe, the captain rapes her. This act of violation hardens Circe, and she turns them into swine. With this as precedence, Circe turning Odysseus' men into pigs is no longer an act of evil, but one of self-preservation, self-defense. Miller's message is clear: One cannot fault a woman wronged for taking steps to ensure it does not happen again. Her rage and pain are those of survivors of sexual assault and harassment and deserve to be felt and released. There are no other sources that mention the violation of Circe, leading to the conclusion that Miller has made it up. This further cements one of the core motivations behind this paper: the construction of female narratives by (most likely) male voices have failed to effectively deliver the complete picture.

Another significant display of gender discrimination occurs early on in *Circe*, when the heroine uses her witchcraft to turn a nymph into a monster. Having fallen in love with a mortal fisherman named Glaucos, Circe uses *pharmaka*, or 'herbs with wondrous powers, sprung from the fallen blood of gods' (Miller, 2018) to turn him into an immortal god, intending to marry him. To her dismay, he courts the nymph Scylla, causing Circe to fly into a jealous rage and use the holy herbs to turn her into an ugly woman. However, she severely underestimates her power, and as subsequent Greek myths note, Scylla goes on to become one of the most feared monsters of Greek myth, a formidable enemy for heroes to face in their trials. However, the point is in what follows. Circe, guilt-ridden, confesses to her father, the Titan Helios, which goes as follows:

"Father," I said, "it was I who made Scylla a monster."

"If the world contained the power you allege, do you think it would fall to such as you to discover it?"

"You dare to contradict me? You who cannot light a single flame, or call one drop of water? Worst of my children, faded and broken, whom I cannot pay a husband to take. Since you were born, I pitied you and allowed you license, yet you grew disobedient and proud. Will you make me hate you more?" (Miller, 2018. p. 52,53).

The last part of this excerpt from the episode clarifies what Helios thinks of his daughter. Helios, here, can be read as the embodiment of the patriarchal Greek society, believing Circe to have but one purpose: to represent the house of the Titan as a bride. What follows cements the belief that women are inferior to men, brought about by Circe's brother Aeëtes.

"I have come," he said, "because I heard of Scylla's transformation, and Glaucos' too, at Circe's hands."

"At the Fates' hands. I tell you, Circe has no such power."

“You are mistaken.” (Miller, 2018. p. 55)

When Aeëtes contradicts his father, he faces no consequences, whereas when Circe tells him he is wrong in believing that the flowers hold no power, he takes on his divine form in rage and burns her until she recants her statement. This, more than anything, drives home the position of men and women in Greek society. The word of the woman, especially one who claims to have power, is not believed until a man confirms it. Fear of powerful women is another factor at play in this outright rejection of the possibility of Circe possessing magical abilities. For centuries, men have used their patriarchal power to oppress and silence women, and fear that women will do the same if the situation is reversed and they hold the power instead.

As a result of being feared, powerful women are also villainized, much as Circe has been in other sources. The *Argonautica*, written by Apollonius Rhodius, which narrates the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts, carries the following line:

The rooms and all the walls of her palace seemed to her to trickle with blood, and a flame was consuming all the drugs with which until then she had bewitched any strangers who came, and she herself extinguished that raging flame with a victim's blood that she had scooped up in her hands, and then she ceased from deathly fear. (Rhodius & Race, 2021. p. 383)

This creates an image of an evil sorceress who takes victims left and right with no thought as to the consequences or even a rational motivation. Another significant source material for Circe is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which contains the aforementioned Glaucus-Scylla episode. In it, Ovid writes:

When Glaucus saw her, the unlucky lover
Wept like a child and swam away from Circe
Whose charms were much too violent for him. (Ovid, 2001. p. 391)

Miller's account of the episode does not absolve Circe of any guilt. Indeed, it is Circe herself who goes on to slay Scylla. These representations demonstrate that wherever there is power, there is fear, and that women who possess power are shown to be wicked, aggressive, “bossy” to justify their otherwise unfounded hatred.

3.3 The Goddess

Another aspect that is deeply connected to fear in Greek mythology is that of divinity. Immortal beings, by default, possess power, and therefore are either respected, feared, or both. Divinity is an unattainable goal for mortals, and a corrupting force to those who do achieve it,

considering the example of Glaucos, who discards Circe -- the very person responsible for his godhood -- once he is transformed. Divinity, however, is also a curse, a burden to Circe. Catharine Macmillian, in her paper “The Witch(ES) of Aiaia: Gender, Immortality and the Chronotope in Madeline Miller’s *Circe*”, writes, ‘Indeed, her immortality is frequently a source of pain to her, as it condemns her to outlive the mortals that she grows attached to, including Daedalus, Icarus, Ariadne, her pet lion, and, eventually, Odysseus’ (Macmillian, 2019).

Icarus, Daedalus, Ariadne. All gone to those dark fields, where hands worked nothing but air, where feet no more touched the earth ... No matter how vivid they were in life, no matter how brilliant, no matter the wonders they made, they came to dust and smoke. Meanwhile every petty and useless god would go on sucking down the bright air until the stars went dark (Miller, 2018. p. 138).

As evidenced by the passage above, Circe feels trapped in her divinity, forced to live out eons while those she cares about grow up, wither and pass on. The paradox of immortality is clear: nothing that lasts forever can hold any true value, and being alive is to live knowing that there is an inevitable end. Towards the end of the novel, Circe chooses to give up her divinity and become mortal, narrating:

I thought once that gods are the opposite of death, but I see now they are more dead than anything, for they are unchanging, and can hold nothing in their hands. (Miller, 2018. p. 334)

3.4 The Mother

Thus far, in the featured sources, Circe has been written as a timid daughter, obedient sister, sexually wicked nymph, powerful sorceress and gracious hostess. Miller’s retelling features Circe in a previously unexplored role: that of a loving mother. As Odysseus sails for home from the shores of Aiaia, Circe reveals her pregnancy to the reader. She forces her nymphs out, even while the pain of a difficult pregnancy claws at her, saying, ‘This is for me’ (Miller, 2018). She delivered her baby herself, falling back upon her divinity to brace her, and when it was time, ‘I drew him forth, and his skin met the air, and he began to wail. I wailed with him, for I had never heard a sweeter sound ... I would look at him and feel a love so sharp it seemed my flesh lay open. I made a list of all the things I would do for him. Scald off my skin. Tear out my eyes. Walk my feet to bones, if only he would be happy and well’ (Miller, 2018. p. 212,213). In just a few lines, the depth of a mother’s love for her child has been captured.

Circe's love for Telegonus, her son, runs so deep that she invites the wrath of the goddess Athena. A prophecy that foretells Odysseus's death at the hands of Telegonus is issued, and, to protect her favored mortal, Athena seeks to kill Telegonus. When Athena offers Circe another man, and the chance to have another child, Circe refuses, stating 'Children are not sacks of grain, to be substituted one for the other' (Miller, 2018). The picture Miller draws of Circe as a single mother, struggling to take care of her newborn child after a difficult childbirth, even as an immortal goddess skilled in sorcery, goes a long way in demonstrating how much endurance every woman who chooses motherhood possesses. It is as a mother that she performs her greatest feats of magic yet, sealing off Aiaia against Athena's onslaughts for sixteen years and even going as far as to break her exile to visit Trygon, an ancient monster of the ocean, to acquire his poison tail as a weapon for Telegonus' protection.

In all her dealings as a goddess, Circe has never been more than what best suited the hero of the myth she was a part of. Odysseus' journey needed her to first be an obstacle, then a helper, and Jason's voyage required her to be a purifying force to wash away the sin of murder from him and Medea. Whatever it was that the hero required of her, she was that. However, even while playing a pre-written role for the benefit of another, she displayed a depth of character and a myriad of qualities that cannot confine her to the same mold. In Miller's retelling, Circe takes center stage, finally portraying all the roles she has ever played and more with a complexity hitherto unseen in her own voice.

4. 'A Golden Cage is Still a Cage': Circe vs. the "Eternal Feminine"

4.1 The Other

In the introduction of the first part of her seminal treatise, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir writes, 'The category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality – that of the Self and the Other' (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953). In a world that has been divided into men and women, the Self is the man and the Other, the woman. The Other can be defined only in terms of the Self, or rather as one that is not the Self, but rather the opposite. Explains Beauvoir: 'Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being ... For him she is sex - absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute -

she is the Other' (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953. p. 15,16). The woman, as stated here, is inessential in this view, which is to say that while she does hold value, as all human beings do, it is only in relation to the man. Every role she plays is differentiated from that of the man, that of a separate entity, and is simultaneously in service to him. The woman, therefore, is not an autonomous being by herself, whereas the man is.

The Other essentially signifies the inferior position that has been ascribed to women in society. This status is not taken up by the Woman voluntarily, as Beauvoir explains: 'Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she - a free and autonomous being like all human creatures - nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other' (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953. p. 27). Man, since the beginning of time, has taken up the role of the One, the Subject, and for every subject there must be an Object. In all representations of Circe prior to Miller's novel, she has been firmly cast as the Other, even with respect to other women. She has been Helios' daughter, Aeëtes' sister, Odysseus' lover, Medea's aunt, Telemachus' wife. Her sole purpose of existence is to play the Other, the not-hero, to affirm the role of the One, the male hero who is the center of the story. Says Beauvoir:

History has shown us that men have always kept their hands in all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchate, they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953. p. 159).

She goes on to talk of the 'myth of Woman', which takes many forms, including that of the Mother, the Lover, the Virgin and the Womb. Each one of these roles is, again, 'defined exclusively in her relation to man' (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953), allowing no space for the woman in which to define herself, free of ties to another.

This myth also operates in dualities, much like the Self and the Other, and these dualities can be seen not just in everyday societal dealings, but also in literature:

As group symbols and social types are generally defined by means of antonyms in pairs, ambivalence will seem to be an intrinsic quality of the Eternal Feminine. The saintly mother has for correlative the cruel stepmother, the angelic young girl has the perverse virgin: thus it will be said sometimes that Mother equals Life, sometimes that Mother equals Death, that every virgin is pure spirit or flesh dedicated to the devil (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953. p. 261).

From the *Odyssey* to Cinderella, the duality in the casting of women is evident. Penelope, the quick witted, patient and virtuous faithful wife, is in contrast to the sorceress Calypso, wicked,

sensual and selfishly using her feminine wiles to keep Odysseus trapped for seven years. Circe is, admittedly, an exception to these dualities, as she plays the wicked witch first, and then transforms into the gracious hostess. While her role as the evil sorceress has been more or less cemented in the works of Ovid, Virgil and Apollonius, it is also her nature to go against what has been written for her.

4.2 The Eternal Feminine

In one of Beauvoir's most significant contributions, she debunks what she calls 'the myth of the Eternal Feminine', mentioned in the previously reproduced passage. The Eternal Feminine is an archetype, a mold that women must confine themselves to. It is the ideal version of a woman, unchanging, static. In order to fulfill the myth of the Eternal Feminine, the woman must never change, must never assert her individuality and must continue to function according to the pre-written scripts placed before her. The Eternal Feminine, along with the Eternal Masculine, are 'vague essences' (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953). What Beauvoir means to say is that these myths are abstract concepts, idealized versions of being and not attainable in real life, as they shouldn't be. She traces the perpetuation of the Eternal Feminine through history, literature, biology, psychology and states that this archetype confines women to immanent and immutable femininity. The myth of Eternal Feminine creates an image of a woman that all must strive for, leaving no space for individual expression, thus allowing men to ensure that women stay in their secondary position in society. Beauvoir goes on to outline the myth of the feminine 'mystery', stating:

It has numerous advantages. And first of all it permits an easy explanation of all that appears inexplicable; the man who 'does not understand' a woman is happy to substitute an objective resistance for a subjective deficiency of mind; instead of admitting his ignorance, he perceives the presence of a 'mystery' outside himself: an alibi, indeed, that flatters laziness and vanity at once ... To say that woman is mystery is to say, not that she is silent, but that her language is not understood; she is there, but hidden behind veils; she exists beyond these uncertain appearances (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953. p. 262,263,264).

The myth of Circe has been told in similar 'uncertain appearances'. All the epics that were referenced in previous chapters have spoken about Circe only briefly, only in terms that serve to further the story of the male hero. She has always been partially obscured, her complete story hidden from view, until she was given a voice in Miller's novel. Miller's predecessors -- Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and others -- have been content with subscribing to the myth of the Eternal

Feminine when it comes to Circe, giving her only those qualities that flesh out the role of the sexually wicked sorceress to complete the picture of duality. But Circe herself, as a character not simply tied to the source that features her, is more than her individual portrayals. Evelien Bracke, in “Of Metis And Magic: The Conceptual Transformations Of Circe And Medea In Ancient Greek Poetry”, states:

There is no denying that there are elements in the Homeric representation of Circe which might be called Other: her status as female uncontrolled by a male kurios, her Titan origins, and her geographical remoteness from the center of the world (whether Olympus or Greece) are the main elements. Circe’s characterization is, however, not made up out of these elements alone: indeed, these characteristics are intertwined with Circe’s metis and help to Odysseus. While incorporating elements which might be called Other, the figure of Circe is therefore not entirely Other (Bracke, 2009. p. 112).

Prior to becoming the eponymous heroine in Miller’s retelling, Circe has been more than who the men who wrote her story believed of her. The perspectives and beliefs of each of Miller’s predecessors added to -- and subtracted from -- the story of Circe, but were propagated as the one honest truth. According to Beauvoir, ‘Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth’ (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953). While this is indeed the very spirit of the genre of retelling, the incorporation of multiple new perspectives to add to the richness of mythologies, the problem comes in when these perspectives fail to do justice to the character.

In a paper titled “Aeaea Is Revisited: Revisionist Mythmaking Strategies In Madeline Miller’s *Circe*”, Merve Altin succinctly argues the point I have been trying to make:

In ancient stories, most of the female characters like Circe are represented and defined according to such traditional feminine skills as loyalty, seduction, beauty, and witchcraft. The portrayals of women in ancient myths address the presumed nature of women and their role in the ancient society. Female beauty, loyalty and women’s physical and mental capabilities are questioned, or feminine attributes such as witchcraft and seduction are criticised and condemned. Thus, it can be argued that ancient myths and stories associated with women reveal male anxiety about both the female body and feminine power (Altin, 2020. p. 147).

This is why Madeline Miller’s *Circe* is an important addition to the myth. Miller does not shy away from Circe, enabling the reader to know the whole truth for the first time. While this also cannot be taken as the absolute truth, Circe is no longer just an ‘uncertain appearance’, a mere footnote in the epic journey of another. As Beauvoir says, ‘Perhaps the myth of woman will

some day be extinguished; the more women assert themselves as human beings, the more the marvelous quality of the Other will die out with them. But today it still exists in the heart of every man' (Beauvoir & Parshley, 1953. p. 162). Circe is no longer the Other, but is the One, the Self, the sole and central Subject, for the first time in Miller's novel. It can be regarded as the first step in extinguishing the myth of the Eternal Feminine, at least with respect to Circe, and reclaiming the individuality she has struggled for since she first opened her flashing gold eyes all those millennia ago.

To fully encompass what Circe means not just to feminist history is difficult to put into words. Circe represents the neglected daughter, the scorned lover, the golden goddess, the gracious hostess, the single mother, the fierce protector and many others. She carries in her previously unexplored depths, and even now, some parts of her may be hidden from us. Says Yvonne Rodax in "In Defense of Circe", 'She has come nearly full circle now. In her next important appearance she may regain her powerful feminine integrity - and then, in a new era, who knows how she may show herself? As a weaver of spells, no doubt - but perhaps of a far different kind' (Rodax, 1971. 9. 596). Perhaps in her next literary reincarnation, we will uncover more of what has made Circe such an influential figure in mythology. Until then, it is my hope that women writers and female characters continue to reject the world before them, reject the "eternal feminine" myth, and build their own.

4.3 Scope for future research

With the ever increasing popularity of feminist retellings of ancient mythologies, the area is growing into a flourishing space for research. This particular study itself can be developed further by applying the same theories and concepts to other works or by studying the novel through different perspectives using a myriad of literary criticisms and theories. Further research can be conducted by exploring different aspects of the narratives and constructions of female characters in Greek mythology that have been altered in modern retellings in an attempt to contribute to the ever-growing literature on the topic and to feminist research at large.

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UNDERSTANDING IMPULSE PURCHASES AND DIFFERENCE IN IMPULSE PURCHASES OF ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS IN URBAN INDIA¹

(With particular reference to Covid-19)

Abstract: This research study focuses on impulse purchases and tries to understand the differences between adolescents and the adult demographic in terms of their impulse purchases. It elaborates on the various reasons for impulse purchases by reviewing existing literature. The main reasons that emerge for the same are self-control, mood, need-fulfilling and increase in capitalism and production of consumer goods. Rise of trends has also contributed significantly to the frequency of impulse purchases. Ease of online shopping, attractive window displays and the inherent need to fit into society are other major themes that highlight the frequency of these purchases. This study also focuses on the Covid-19 lockdown and how the same as affected impulse purchases of consumers. The concept of "revenge buying" establishing itself after the restrictions on lockdown were eased was reported. The questionnaire aims at understanding the frequency, reason and the main sectors of revenge buying between the two demographics. An eight scale questionnaire used in another study that was focussed on impulse purchases in India has been incorporated in this questionnaire. A T-test is used to find the difference between adolescent and adult impulse purchases by using the data of the questionnaire . The questionnaire and results report adolescents being more frequent impulse purchasers as compared to the adult demographic. The change in consumption and spending patterns post lockdown was also reported in my questionnaire.

Keywords: Impulse buying, Revenge buying, Consumption pattern, Expenditure, Shopping, impulsive spending, compulsive buying, unplanned buying.

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SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND

Ever since the advent of industrialization, consumption has increased exponentially. The rise of capitalism, increase in disposable income, and an inherent desire to show strength and power through the purchase of luxurious goods has led to high levels of consumption. This has led to modern consumption, which is said to occur in those societies where individuals and groups shape membership identity in relation to the goods owned. Consumption and one's ideas about modern consumption began in the 18th and the 19th century with the efforts of economists to define who is a "consumer".

Psychology has been known to play a huge role in a lot of one's economic decisions while purchasing goods. One's current psychological state, emotions have been known to affect one's purchasing habits. (Parmar, 2013). This research project highlights the concept of "Impulse purchases". Impulse buying is defined by Rook and Gardener (2013) as an unplanned behaviour involving quick decision making and the tendency for immediate acquisition of the product. A customer is known to take such buying decisions in the spur of the moment, and these decisions are primarily triggered by emotions and their current feelings. One's social situations affect their consumption patterns. Someone might prefer going on a date to a fast-food joint as compared to someone else who would prefer going to an expensive restaurant for their date. Likewise, you may have turned down a drink or dessert on a date because you were worried about what the person you were with might have thought of (Matilla & Wirtz, 2008). A sour mood can drastically spoil a consumers desire to shop. The 2008 crash of the US economy and the subsequent recession led to many consumers feeling poorer, which led to a reduction in consumer spending. Depressed moods have also affected some businesses in a positive way. The sales of the products via television media were highest ever during the 2008 crash of the stock market. Consumers who could not afford to go on vacation at that time would shop on channels on their television screens and were treating themselves to the product (Ward, 2009).

Lastly, cognitive age is a significant predictor of consumer behaviours, including people's dining out, watching television, going to bars and dance clubs, playing computer games, and shopping (Barak & Gould, 1985). The purpose of this paper is to highlight impulse buying among teenagers and adults and compare the differences between impulse purchases between those two demographics and also focus on the change in impulse buying behaviour due to Covid-19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

This research has some general objectives, which are to understand impulse purchases and its underlying concepts and to investigate how the economics of modern consumption is related to various psychological concepts. It also has some specific objectives such as to understand impulse purchases among teenagers and adults and the factors that affect the same, gauging the difference in impulse purchases between teenagers and adults, understanding how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected impulse purchases among both the demographics.

This research project uses a variety of primary data collection techniques to help us understand the research questions better, and the details of the same are as follows.

METHODOLOGY

This research study makes use of survey research using primary data from adolescents and adults in India. In this research, both adolescents that are in the age group of 14-19 years of age and to primarily mid-range adults between the ages of 20-60 years are recruited to participate in the survey. The questionnaire will include some close-ended and some open ended questions. The same will emphasize on questions revolving around their monthly purchases and how many of them are impulse purchases. This research will also propose to include questions which will help understand the difference in their levels of purchases pre and post the Covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire will focus on the broad theme of impulse purchases to understand other underlying concepts such as purchasing power and the extent to which emotions and current dispositions can affect one's purchases. A part of this research will also be secondary in nature. It will look at pre-existing literature and any publicly available data on consumption trends to identify trends among these demographics and get a better understanding of the same. Several research papers and academic articles will be used for this purpose. Data will be collected from different socio-economic backgrounds to get a more holistic view on the topic. The main hypothesis that this study will focus on is "Adolescents are more susceptible to indulge in impulse purchases as compared to adults, moreover Covid-19 has led to an increased level of impulse purchases for both of the demographics." The final research analysis will contain what the participants have answered in their questionnaire and will also try to understand the underlying concepts that come into play. This study will analyse their responses in relation to economic and psychological context as these two are the main

area of the research. A cross-sectional approach to this study will be followed since it focuses on a very specific population and a specific time. It aims to understand the economic aspect of impulse buying.

For the questionnaire, a scale is incorporated that was used by (Badagaiyan, Verma, Dixit, 2016). This research study was focused on measuring the impulse buying tendency, particularly in context to Indian consumers and the scale used by these researchers was selected in a way that would incorporate all the trends of Indian consumers. For their study they selected a brief 10 version personality development scale that was created by Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann (2003). The impulse buying behaviour was measured on a two item scale which were, "I ended up spending more money than I originally set to spend" and "I bought more than I had planned to buy". The authors used these above scale to develop a 8 item scale which would be more apt to understand impulse buying behaviour in the Indian context. The same scale is used in this study under a section in the questionnaire to help us understand impulse buying behaviour among adolescents and adults and also gauge the difference between the two demographics.

Operational Definitions

This research has several operational definitions, which are as follows, (a). Consumer- A consumer is a person or a group who intends to order, order, or uses purchased goods, products, or services primarily for personal, social, family, household, and similar needs, not directly related to entrepreneurial or business activities. (b). Budget- A budget is a financial plan for a financial period. It could include sales, revenues, resource quantities, costs, expenses, assets, liabilities and cash flow. (c). Impulse purchase- An impulse purchase or impulse buying is an unplanned decision to buy a product or service, made just before a purchase. (d). Adolescents- The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 and 19. (e). Adults- Adults are defined as those individuals usually above the age of 18 years who are fully developed and mature.

A thorough secondary research was also done, which is as follows:

SECTION 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

Impulse buying behavior has been defined as a sudden, compelling and hedonically complex buying behavior by Cobb and Hoyer (1986). They also state that impulse buying involves a hedonistic element as well. It is also a means by which one can improve their mood (Elliot, 1994) and also by the process of self-gifting. (Demoss, 1990). Existing literature on impulse buying behaviors mentions credit availability and increase in disposable income as major factor that influences impulse buying behavior in consumers. The increase in capitalism and the rise of trends among the younger generation such as concepts of fast fashion have accelerated the consumption industry thus resulting in a monumental increase in impulse purchases made by Generation Z. Another major reason for the increase in impulse purchases has been attributed to the growth of mass media and more exposure to the same for Generation Z. The technological boom which countries experienced in the late 1900's and early 2000's has gone a long way in influencing purchases and the accessibility and efficiency of purchasing goods. With respect to India, the Indian Brand Equity Foundation has stated that from \$38.5 billion in 2017 to over \$200 billion dollars by 2026. Self-control and impulse buying are very closely linked. This is because impulse buying is like a war that goes on, one side is the sudden urge or desire to purchase a good or service and the other is the will-power or having the self-control to resist and not give in. This creates a conflicting goal situation and an individual must decide any one option that they need to follow (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991).

Obsessive buying behavior is different from impulse buying. Researchers have found that obsessive buying is a disorder under the broad spectrum of the obsessive-compulsive disorder (Frost et al, 2000) It is also found to be one of the major factors of the disorder spectrum. Existing literature also mentions that in addition to obsessive purchases of goods, obsessive buying disorder also encompasses consistent and frequent thoughts or images that lead to the stimulation of obsessive buying with the primary goal in mind to alleviate the anxiety and stress associated with these thoughts. O'Guinn and Faber differentiated between impulsive and compulsive buying behavior by mentioning that impulse buying involved the purchase of a single item whereas compulsive buying was related more to the act of buying.

Main factors affecting one's consumption patterns

a. Mood

One's current emotions and disposition are known to play a key role in one's consumption behaviour. Being sad or unhappy can negatively affect one's consumption. The global financial crisis in 2008 resulted in lesser consumption expenditure by individuals in the United States. Moreover the over-stimulation of a store environment has been found to lead to a higher number of impulse purchases. The moods of employees and how they interact with customers also plays a huge role in buying behaviour (Mattila and Wirtz, 2008). Moreover impulse buying has a strong link with negative mood, the coping mechanism when one is in a negative mood is impulse buying, with the primary aim for the same being to reduce stressors in one's life and a way to evade negative psychological states (Silvera, 2008). Eccles and Wigfield (2002) recognised that compulsive and impulsive buying behaviour is in a way a "mood-repair strategy" that is used by an individual.

b. Self- concept

Self-concept does play a role in one's consumption. Self-concept broadly refers to how one sees themselves. It can either be positive or it can be negative. The ideal self is defined as how one would like to see themselves, the pursuit of which in turn can result in more purchases. This can range from seeing oneself as richer or prettier, more popular etc. "Marketing researchers believe that people buy those products which enhance how they see themselves- in order to get closer to their ideal selves." (University of Minnesota, 2015). Many products that are advertised today are done so in such a way that makes one want to purchase them in order to get closer to one's ideal self. This can lead to increased purchasing behavior. Cohen (2004) in respect to teenagers as impulse buyers state that teenagers understand the meaning behind status and purchasing a certain type of brand or good. This in turn defines their self-concept and thus teenagers control one's impression by purchasing certain products or shopping from particular brands.

c. Need Fulfilling

Abraham Maslow's need hierarchy theory states that an individual would first fulfil their lower-order needs before moving on to the higher-order needs. He makes a pyramid and adds different needs from the bottom-(most important) to the top (least important).

Needs other than the most basic physiological needs arise at different points in different people's lives. Among teenagers, social needs play a higher role in order to conform and be accepted well with their peers. Hence this leads to teenagers buying certain types of goods. Young adults tend to focus more on esteem needs by thinking about their future, applying to good universities. Adults tend to focus more on their self-actualization needs, when they try to achieve their full potential. During the Covid-19 pandemic due to the misinformation and the fear created on social media channels about the shortage of essential commodities, it led to fear and panic among the citizens which led to them having more impulse purchases of essential commodities such as food, toilet rolls etc and also essential commodities (Crabble, 2020). This can be linked to Abraham Maslow's need hierarchy chart which states that physiological needs are at the bottom of the pyramid. Citizens tried to fulfil their physiological needs by impulse purchase of essential commodities.

2. Impulse Buying

Merzer (2014) stated that almost 75% of one's purchases are unplanned. There are a variety of factors that affect one's impulse buying, one of them is the store environment. Research by Mattila and Wirtz found that a nice calm, highly pleasant and a very stimulating store environment led to more impulse purchases. When the store was over-stimulating the self-reported impulse buying was at its peak. This data is also consistent with psychological theories which state that high levels of arousals lead to lessening of people's self-regulation. Frequent buyers at a particular store are known to have a larger number of unplanned purchases at the store. An unfamiliar environment or a new store on the other hand makes people more aware and cautious of their actions thus reducing their impulse purchases. According to Addo (2020) internal stimuli as well as external stimuli both seem to affect an individual's impulse buying behaviour. Moreover, Prasad (2020) (Pg:42) states "that impulse buying occurs when consumers experience an expected, intense and continuous impulse to buy something immediately." The physical appearance of the store and the overall environment of the store plays a huge role in influencing a consumer's decision for current and future purchases.

Rook and Hock (1985) found out that there are a few main parts to an impulse purchase: acting spontaneously, being in a state of emotional disequilibrium and psychological clashes. Product displayed on shelves may create the sudden urge to purchase the same, moreover endorsements by celebrities heavily influence teenagers and young adults in respect to their purchasing habits. Coupled with little self-control an individual indulges in an impulse buy. Key findings in the research by Vishnu and Raheem (2013) state that despite the consumers' income level window displays, the store environment and visual merchandising had the most impact on a consumer's impulse purchases.

3. Impulse purchases in the fashion industry

The increasing profitability of the fashion industry first came into light in the beginning of the 2000's where it was found that American aged between 12-19 years held over \$153 billion dollars' worth purchasing power in the industry (Parker et al., 2004). This highlights the power rested among the teenagers and adolescents to influence an industry solely based on their purchasing habits. Weeks (2004) examined the consumer attitudes and debt and their influence on consumer expenditure of women. He found that women were unwilling to reduce their expenditure on fashion and would even consider going into huge amounts of debts in order to purchase inexpensive or less affordable items. Gender has been found to heavily influence fashion expenditure with women having a higher fashion expenditure than men. Particularly in the context of fashion, the growth of the fashion industry in the last decade has been synonymous with the increase in consumption of fashion goods. This has also led to more impulse purchases "yearly expenditure was more likely to be influenced by impulse buying yearly expenditure was more likely to be influenced by impulse buying" (Pentecost and Andrews, 2010).

4. Difference between adolescent and adult impulse buyers

In the current century, adolescents are being targeted more by brands and marketing agencies because in the recent time this demographic has witnessed an increase in the availability of credit and hence more disposable income in the hands of teenagers and also because they are also the first demographic that adopts a particular fashion, trend or brand. They are also known to be aware of the store image (Bristol, 2001). Gil states that the young or the teenage demographic has more income than adults because they do not have to spend their money on

paying for necessities such as food, water and electricity. Those bills are taken care of by their parents and hence teenagers focus more on spending their money on fashion, food etc.

Early researchers trying to identify the cause behind the difference between adolescent and adult impulse buyers have found that teenagers have less self-control over their actions and their moods vary much more as compared to adults. (Larson, 1980). Moreover, Pechmann in his research suggested that the difference between the purchasing habits of these two demographics is also because of the prefrontal cortex. Adolescents have more frequent mood swings than adults, and they also experience more intense impulse emotions, the self-control necessary to control these emotions rests in the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is not fully developed in adolescents as it develops with age and experience, thus making the younger demographic more susceptible to impulse purchases. (Dahl, 2004). Inter-group research by Natalie, Chris and Gillian found that there was a very strong relationship between reward and impulse purchases in adolescents. The younger consumers purchased goods impulsively as a reward. They also found out that adults make more impulse purchases online as compared to teenagers. Adults are much more aware of their finances and budget during impulse purchases. In context to adults, the Kukar-Kinney study states that the price perception for an excessive and compulsive buyer as compared to any non-compulsive and non-excessive impulse buyer.

5. Covid-19 and Purchasing habits

Covid-19 has undoubtedly taken the world by storm. The unprecedented global outbreak that left people in panic and fear has certainly affected one's consumption patterns. The lockdown imposed by countries worldwide has led to "panic buying" among the citizens of the country. According to Oxford panic buying (2021) is defined as the "action of buying large quantities of a particular product or commodity due to sudden fears of a forthcoming shortage and price increase." When the lockdown was imposed, billions of people were confined to their homes. This created panic for purchasing essential commodities so that they are sufficiently present for use during lockdown. The US in particular had an acute shortage of toilet rolls. The demands for other hygiene and grocery items increased at an exponential rate. To understand panic buying in a better way, let us first elaborate on the SOR model. The SOR model elaborates on the "various aspects of the environment act as stimuli (S) that together affect people's internal states and act as organisms (O), which in turn drive their behavioural responses (R)" (Mehrabian and Russell, 1977) During the pandemic the external stimuli was

the constant information on various social media channels about the scarcity of essential goods in stores. In context to organisms, Akhtar found out that perceived arousal affects behavioural outcomes, and the same is influenced by the processing of information available online, motivations and cognitive feelings. Lastly, the response in the context of the global pandemic is this heightened level of purchases, thus leading to a shortage of goods.

Various studies show that the urge to buy impulsively has a very strong positive effect on the customer's impulsive buying behaviour. Research by Tahir, et al, (2021) found that the fear and the overall panic that was raised by the Covid-19 pandemic created a fear of scarcity among all the consumers and this led to an increase of an perceived arousal level and this finally leads to obsessive and a very compulsive buying behaviour. The results of this research were also consistent with the SOR model as explained above.

According to Addo and Wegman the panic that arose in covid-19 was because of the fear of survival. Considering survival is an essential for every individual, fear arose as something that could be used as a safeguard in this global pandemic situation where life was endangered. Hence, the people responded by stacking up all essential goods and commodities. They also state that social media became the primary mode of interacting with other humans and keeping in touch with what was happening outside their homes. Social media created panic and led to increased fear further stimulating impulse buying. " Different social media channels have contributed significantly towards misinformation." (Zhang, 2019). The findings of the study conducted by Rizwan et. Al (2021), conclude that during the global pandemic the fear of a complete lockdown and the panic associated with the same were the essential influencers that led to impulse buying during the Covid times among the US population. Moreover, they also found that one of the other major reasons that led to panic buying was misinformation and the spreading of fake news. However, the strongest variable that affected the consumer purchases was undoubtedly Covid-19.

Due to excessive movement restraints that were imposed by governments on their citizens all around the world, we also see revenge buying emerging as a trend as soon as lockdown restrictions in countries were uplifted. Revenge buying is defined as a phenomenon where the consumer buys aggressively for products after not being allowed to for a period of time. This term is also called retaliatory consumption. This emerged in China in the 1980's when the country was going through a cultural revolution. The main effects of trying to overcome hunger and poverty led to the citizens aggressively buying or shopping primarily in food products.

French luxury company named Hermes reported sales of \$2.7 million dollars on a single day in China on the 4th of April on their stand-alone store in Guangzhou after the country opened up after a period of 2 months(Saraswathy, 2021). The Covid-19 lockdown that was imposed worldwide left a variety of buyers dissatisfied and to recuperate from all the months of not being able to purchase goods, consumers resorted to revenge buying. Even India has reported instances of revenge buying where sales of highly-priced goods such as expensive smartwatches and iPhones have dramatically increased.

This research also analysed primary data collection which is as follows:

SECTION 3 - QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Primary Data Findings

60 responses were collected in total.

Procedure

Google forms were sent via various social media apps, to get as diverse a pool of respondents.

In terms of gender, 43 responses from females and 17 responses from males were received. 51 responses from students were received, out of which 6 were salaried and 3 were self-employed. 36 of the respondents completed 12th as their last educational qualification. 16 had last completed undergraduate, 4 postgraduate, 2 had completed 10th and 2 a professional degree.

44.8% of the respondents had a monthly consumption expenditure of over 50,000. 29.3% had a consumption expenditure between 20,000-50,000, 15.5% had one between 10,000-20,000, 8.6% had one between 5,000 and 10,000 and 1 respondent had monthly consumption below 5,000. The consumption expenditure of my respondents is important in highlighting the level of impulse purchases or purchases in general that a consumer could make. The average amount of purchases keep increasing as the level of consumption expenditure rises. This also highlights the socio-economic background for a majority of my respondents. They are from the upper-middle class.

53.3% of respondents stated that their purchases were planned in advance as compared to 15% of respondents who stated that their purchases were not planned in advance. Moreover, 65% of the respondents stated that they strongly consider before purchasing any item as compared to 25% who did not think before purchasing items. 41.7% respondents strongly disagreed to and 26.7% somewhat disagreed to "often buying without thinking". 23.3% of respondents stated that they sometimes buy without thinking and 5% respondents strongly agree to buying without thinking. This helps us understand that the majority of my respondents are implying that they do not make many impulse purchases and before every item they purchase, they think whether they really need the item and then making a conscious decision to buy it than impulsively purchase it. However, 35% of the respondents somewhat agreed, and 13.3% strongly agreed to buying items because they like buying things rather than having a need for them. This highlights discrepancies between answers of many respondents. They have previously stated that they carefully plan all their purchases and do not buy without thinking however they also agree to buying things they like or indulging in impulse purchases in some way. This is also supported by 13.3% of the respondents strongly agreeing and 53.3% somewhat agreeing to buying products and services based on how they feel at that moment. This data is also consistent with various researches conducted on impulse purchases that conclude that one's current emotions and dispositions do indeed drive one's impulse purchases, and many at times, one's purchases are based on their current emotions.

18.3% respondents strongly agree and 36.7% respondents somewhat agree as compared to only 13.3% who strongly agreed and 5% somewhat disagreeing to having fun to make purchases spontaneously. This information also aids in understanding that a majority of my respondents are engaged in frequent impulse purchases. Moreover, 36.7% strongly agree and 38.3% somewhat agree to buying goods when they see a discount or sale on those items. From a marketing point of view, this highlights the effectiveness of discount strategies that are used by various companies for increasing sales and revenue. Only 30% of the respondents agreed to as compared to 50.7% of the respondents who disagreed to regret making frequent impulse purchases.

39 of the respondents stated that most of their impulse purchases are from the fashion sector and 36 respondents stated that most of their impulse purchases were from the food sector. The second highest sector was household/consumer goods with 8 respondents stating it being the sector from where they frequently make impulse purchases from. 5 stated technology as being

their main sector. Only 1 stated anime merchandise as being their main sector for impulse purchases. This information is important in understanding the fashion and food sectors have emerged as one of the most common sectors for impulse purchases. This can be linked to the entire concept of fast fashion and junk food. Fast fashion is this highly profitable business strategy where big fashion outlets create high-fashion designs in huge quantities at low cost. This makes it affordable for the consumer to purchase the same frequently. Trends in fast fashion keep changing rapidly, and it creates a cycle where a consumer buys more and more fashion goods more frequently to not only keep up with the trend but also satisfy their impulse purchasing urges. In fast-food consumption, it helps with providing the consumer instant gratification of impulse urges, and thus the same is one of the highest voted sectors where my respondents spend on impulse purchases.

43 of the respondents stated being involved in impulse purchases mostly through the online medium by using various e-commerce websites. 23 responded as malls the main place for their impulse purchase. 13 states street shopping, 6 stated stand-alone luxury stores and 11 stated various social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook as being their main source for impulse purchases. 9 responded that they often overshoot their monthly expenditure because of indulging in impulse purchases. 27 stated sometimes and 24 stated no unless it being an emergency when asked if they often exceed their monthly expenditure being involved in impulse purchases. In the questions pertaining to the current pandemic, 57.6% of the respondents stated that during the COVID-19 lockdown they did purchase products and stock them in fear of shortage. 28.8% said no and 13.6% were unsure about the same. This explains to us that a majority of the respondents did in fact purchase impulsively due to fear which guided their decision to stock up goods. Emotions do in fact drive one's impulse purchases and this response highlights the same. 22 respondents mentioned buying many items as soon as lockdown restrictions were uplifted to cover up not being able to buy them during the lockdown. This helps us understand that some of my respondents indulged in revenge buying. The restrictions of lockdown forced many to miss out on buying items and indulging in retail therapy. Revenge buying can be termed as the overindulgence in retail therapy by consumers who believed that they missed out on purchasing items from their favourite stores due to the lockdown.

In the open ended question "Have your consumption patterns changed after the Covid-19? If no, why not? If yes, how have they changed." received a wide variety of responses. One

respondent stated that they heavily splurged on online sites post lockdown to compensate for not being able to purchase items during lockdown. This respondent indulged in what is referred to as revenge buying. Another stated spending less money on ordering food and fast food because of the coronavirus and indulging more in home cooked meals for their own safety. Some respondents stated spending less on luxury products and more on necessary goods, while some stated having an increased expenditure on luxury goods post the lockdown. Another respondent stated spending less money on clothing considering they hardly step out of their homes now. Majority of the respondents stated that their consumption expenditure had not changed or reduced after the lockdown.

All the adult respondents in the questionnaire responded that they had either curbed their expenses or tried to not have any unnecessary purchases, if one compare these responses to those of adolescents, some of them have stated splurging heavily on goods post lockdown through online mediums and visiting different stores in malls. Adults seemed to have realized the need to save more money for the future because of the uncertain times one is currently living in, while adolescents felt that splurging was an escape for them from these uncertain times. However, most of the adolescents have realized their consumption patterns and have tried to curb unrequired consumption post the coronavirus lockdown.

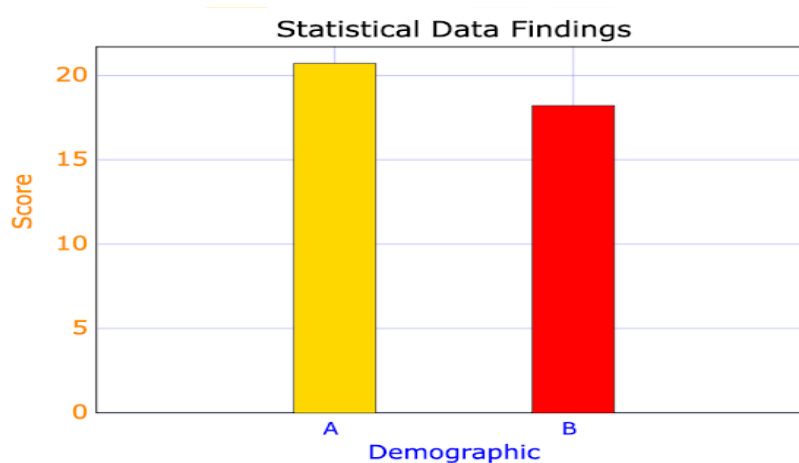
STATISTICAL DATA FINDINGS

Out of 60 responses in total 40 responses were from adolescents between the age group of 12-19 and 20 were adults falling within the demographic of 20 and above. The first three statements, "Most of my purchases are planned in advance", "Before I buy something, I carefully consider whether I need it" and "I carefully plan most of my purchases." were reverse coded. The other 5 statements "I often buy without thinking", "I sometimes buy things because I like buying things rather than because I need them", "I buy what I like without thinking of the consequences", "I buy products and services according to how I feel at the moment" and "It is fun to buy spontaneously" were coded as follows: 1- Strongly disagree, 2- Somewhat disagree, 3- Neither agree or disagree, 4- somewhat agree and 5- strongly agree. The results were as follows:

The adolescent demographic scored an average of 20.7 and the adults scored an average of 18.2. These scores highlight that adolescents are more frequent impulse purchasers as compared to adults. They are driven by current emotions and dispositions and various other

factors such as store displays influence their purchases frequently. This also answers my main research question which was to understand the difference between adolescent and adults impulse purchasers.

A t-test was also performed, and the data for the same was as follows: $N = 20$ respondents were among the age group of 20 above, while $N = 40$ respondents were a part of the adolescent demographic (age group of 12-19). The test revealed no statistically significant difference between the two demographics in terms of impulse purchases as measured by the impulse purchase behaviour scale. The t-value was -0.478 and the p-value was .63, below the conventional significance level of 0.1.



In the above graph A shows the average score of adolescents and B shows the average score of adults. This graph highlights that although adolescents are more frequent impulse purchasers, there isn't much difference between the adults and adolescent demographic in terms of indulging in impulse purchases.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

The main research question on the difference between impulse purchases of adolescents and adults in urban India was addressed by my statistical findings. Statistical analysis revealed that adolescents are more frequent impulse purchasers. This is also supported by the literature review. Adolescents are targeted more by brands and agencies because of the increase in the

availability of credit in the hands of this demographic. (Larson, 1980) in his research found that adolescents have very little control over their actions and their moods as compared to an adult. (Dahl, 2004) suggests the prefrontal cortex to play a role in the difference in purchasing habits of the two demographics. The prefrontal cortex is not fully developed in adolescents as the same develops with age and experience and hence adults are more conscious about the effect of their decisions.

The open-ended question helped one understand how the current pandemic had changed purchasing habits of consumers. The majority of the respondents are from the upper-middle class socio-economic background, and thus one does not see any respondent citing "financial restraints" due to lockdown as one of the reasons for reducing their expenditure on various items. In India, a huge chunk of the population suffered severe losses due to the pandemic, particularly the migrant laborers and the daily wage workers. This also highlights income inequality to an extent in the Indian context. While the rich could still afford to do everything that they did before the pandemic the lower-socio economic classes had to curb their expenses to survive.

The expenditure on essential commodities increased during this lockdown, and the expenditure on clothing, travel, entertainment, and fashion related goods was drastically reduced. This data can be compared to Maslow's hierarchy pyramid. Abraham Maslow's need hierarchy theory states that an individual would first fulfil their lower-order needs before moving on to the higher-order needs. He makes a pyramid and adds different needs from the bottom-(most important) to the top (least important). Physiological needs which are food, water are the most important and the data in the questionnaire is consistent with the same. The respondents answered spending more on these items during lockdown as compared to pre-lockdown period. Moreover, after the pandemic, many realised they splurged a lot of money on things that aren't essential and satisfy only their higher-order needs. The esteem needs which are at the top of the pyramid are buying expensive clothing, cars etc, and the expenditure on the same was sharply reduced by the respondents.

However this research also had many limitations which are as follows:

SECTION 4- LIMITATIONS

The limitations for this study include not much research being done in context to comparing the impulse purchases between adolescents and adults, moreover post COVID-19, there aren't any pre-existing literature on the effect of this pandemic on impulse purchases. While collecting responses, another limitation is the amount of impulse purchases would be self-reported and would thus rely completely on participant recall than the actual behaviour. Impulse buying could be so subconscious that a respondent may not be able to understand that their purchases categorize as impulse buys. The sample size is also pretty small and focuses only in the context of urban India. Keeping in mind the respondents visit a wide variety of stores, it can be argued that impulse purchases can be highly context-specific. There needs to be more work done on impulse buy in context to a particular store or store type which might provide additional information.

CONCLUSION

The main research question was answered, and it was found that adolescents indulge in more impulse purchases as compared to adults.

USE OF THIS STUDY

This study will be useful for individuals trying to understand impulse purchases and those who want to understand the role of age in impulse purchases. It can also be used by companies and advertising agencies to understand the psychology of consumers and tailor their advertisements in a way that will receive maximum positive feedback from consumers. This can also help economists in understanding which sectors are going to grow in the future, where currently the consumers are spending their substantial income in. Marketing agencies can understand how the current pandemic has affected buying behaviours of their consumers and how it can affect their organization.

FUTURE SCOPE

More research can be done to understand the various underlying causes of impulse buying behaviour on a deeper scale. There can also be focussed research on each of the demographics to understand the overall trend followed by that demographic on a more deeper level.

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